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KRISHNA MENON

Emil Lengyel

Shortly after this book had gone to press, Communist China invaded northern India and soon thereafter V. K. Krishna Menon was dismissed from his post as India's Defense Minister amid a chorus of epithets such as "bungler," "national disgrace" and "crypto-Communist." The fall of the man who is Nehru's closest friend is merely the latest incident in a lifetime filled with controversy and paradox. Is Krishna Menon a friend of Communism and the implacable enemy of the West? Or is he simply an Indian patriot sternly resolved not to permit his country to be drawn into the Cold War? Is he a democrat still able to contribute to orderly political development in India, or is he capable, as some suggest, of leading a leftist coup to seize control of the government?

Krishna Menon is representative of an important twentieth-century phenomenon: the western-trained, Marxist-influenced

[Continued on back flap]

Jacket design by Algot Stenbery

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~~KRISHNA MENON~~

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*Emil Lengyel is the author
of the following books:*

The Subcontinent of India

Cattle Car Express

Hitler

The Cauldron Boils

The New Deal in Europe

Millions of Dictators

The Danube

Turkey

Dakar: Outpost of Two Hemispheres

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Egypt's Role in World Affairs

The Changing Middle East

1000 Years of Hungary

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Origin and Consequences of World War II

As We See Russia

Eye Witness

Scenarios

The World in Revolt

EMIL LENGYEL

Krishna Menon



WALKER AND COMPANY

NEW YORK

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Published simultaneously in Canada
by George J. McLeod, Ltd., Toronto.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 62-19497

Manufactured in the United States of America

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To my son

PETER

who has just set out on the exploration
of the wonders of the world

▪

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have placed their valuable time and knowledge at my disposal in the preparation of this book. Special thanks are due to Bridget Tunnard, secretary of The India League in London for many years; to Mrs. Emily Rouse, landlady of Krishna Menon in Camden Town for about a decade; to officials of the St. Pancras Metropolitan Borough, and particularly to D. C. Whitlum, Deputy Town Clerk; to Leonard Marcus, Deputy Librarian; also to C. J. Ratchford, leader of the Council, St. Pancras Metropolitan Borough; to W. Timothy Donovan, former leader of the Conservative group of the Council.

I am deeply indebted to the Hon. Reginald W. Sorensen, Member of Parliament for Leyton; to the Hon. Julius Silverman, Member of Parliament for Aston, long linked with The India League in London. I am deeply indebted to H. Lyn Harris, former principal of St. Christopher's School, Letchworth, Herts., for giving me so much of his time on the occasion of my unannounced visit.

My profound thanks to Professor Zoë Tsagos, a resident of

Bombay, and to Jacob Sonny, of Kerala, both of whom have been of much help. Krishna Menon and several of his associates were good enough to answer many questions in personal interviews, as were delegates at the United Nations, Indian officials and private individuals in India, New York and London. Thanks also to *The Hindustan Times*, for placing its daily issues and overseas weeklies at my disposal. The interpretations and conclusions derived from the facts placed at my disposal are, naturally, my own.

Dr. Peter Sammartino, President of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Rutherford, New Jersey, placed me under deep obligation by enabling me to take a fresh look at India. My thanks also to Dean Clair W. Black and Dean Loyd Haberly for making it possible for me to engage in such extracurricular activities as the writing of this book. My colleagues and friends, Professor Anthony P. Alessandrini and Professor Kenneth M. MacKenzie helped me greatly with useful suggestions. My friends of many years, Madeleine and Tibor Mikes, helped me by calling my attention to valuable sources of information. And Livia, my wife, helped to create the serene setting which is so essential in my profession.

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CHAPTER I

On the Malabar Coast

A COMBINED TROPICAL PARADISE and hell is the portion of the Malabar Coast where Vengalil Krishnan Krishna Menon was born. The coast is a paradise because of the bluest of all seas, the Arabian, and the bluest of all southern skies. But it is hell for those dwellers in this heavenly abode who have not enough to eat.

Today the region forms part of one of the states of the Republic of India—Kerala, the southwesternmost state. It sprawls along the coast toward Cape Comorin, the southernmost point of the subcontinent. The region of Krishna Menon's birthplace is also known as Malayalam, which is the name of both an area and a language. *Mala* means hill, and *alam* means valley, and so the name provides a concise description of the region in one euphonious word. However, it is the name "Malabar" which is best known to the western world, because it was the magnet that attracted the adventurers of the era of exploration Indiaward; Columbus, for one. It is the country of spice hills, the land of the Malabar almond, the Malabar bark, the Malabar catmint and the Malabar leaf. The very

word *malabar* means a Hindu type of cotton handkerchief in brilliant hues.

Nature is as generous on this coast as it is capricious. The monsoon clouds inking out the sky may contain too much rain, and then there is a flood. Or they may be empty of rain, and then there is death. The coast has the type of climate that induces the forces of nature to run wild. The fauna and flora are overanimated, stirring, swarming, pullulating, sucking one another's life, boring into one another, overlapping, stifling, choking. Foliage acrobats sling their tendrils across the branches of the trees, thrusting their greedy sinews toward the life-giving skies. The fauna swarm beneath a vast canopy, the "green mansion," which is supported by the stately tenants of the tropical forests—sandalwood, ebony and teak.

"Lagoon-studded, palm-fringed, etched against the backdrop of lush mountains," the tourist guide raves, and indeed the state is perhaps the most attractive in India. Standing guard over the coastline are the Western Ghats—the mountains—closing in on the sea here, shying away from it there, affording the small people a chance to till discontinuous segments of the rich alluvial soil.

The tousled mountaintops hold converse with the black clouds, which the peasant prefers to the radiant sky. Wrinkled by gullies, by angry gaps and perilous chasms, the mountains, arrowing up to eight thousand feet, provide India's best commercial timber. The sand on the shores yields monazite.

The observer's delighted eyes encompass the High Range, in the north of the Malabar Coast, known locally as the Aaanaimalais, or Elephant Hills. Below the High Range are the magnets of the explorer-adventurers of another day, the Cardamom Hills, soaring up to seven thousand feet.

The slopes are spiced with the fragrance that served as an

aphrodisiac halfway around the world—the spices for the possession of which fearless men were willing to face the perils of an endless voyage into the darkest caverns of the unknown. This was the cause of the gleam in the eyes of Columbus when he set sail westward to explore the sea route to Cathay, the Indies and the Land of Spice. Those spices are still there—nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper and cloves—coveted for seasoning, although no longer needed for the preservation of food. The slopes of the Ghats are covered by fields of coffee and tea. Rubber trees are stabbed for their precious juice, and cinchona trees are scalped for the medicinal gifts of their barks. The foothills of the Ghats level off into the tableland, crisscrossed by streams which were born as foamy mountain creeks, and also by the canals of sluggish backwater, and the lagoons. Spreading as far as the eye can see are the beaches cradling the fishermen's boats.

The houses—or rather, hovels—are of mud, with palm-leaved, thatched roofs, huddling close together, but seldom forming a pattern. They trail off into the distance, seeking links with other hamlets, not forming clusters around community centers but congregating around the sanctuaries of many creeds. These villages live in the shadow of the authority of the *panchayats*, five-men councils of elders, presided over by headmen. Only the domineering presence of occasional towns—political, economic and social centers—interrupts the ageless village life.

Besides the forces of life-giving nature, now munificent, now scant, there are also the dangers of nature. It is not so much the big animals, fattened by the life- and death-giving forces of tropical nature, which present the perils. More dangerous are the tiny creatures that spike themselves into the plants and people, living on flesh and the food of the flesh.

And whenever their regimented attack prevails, or when the fish are diverted from their normal routes by the deep heavings of the sea, the acrid smoke of the hovels fails to curl skyward. That is a bad sign, and then people lie down and die.

Vengalil Krishnan Krishna Menon was born on May 3, 1897. In those days there were no dependable records of births, marriages and deaths in India, and especially not in this portion of the South. It was sufficient for neighbors of the same caste to know who was born and who got married. As to deaths, who could keep track of them when calamity struck? The time of Krishna Menon's birth is, therefore, a mere approximation.

The Malabar Coast is different from any other part of India. Indeed, every part of India is different from every other part. India is a universe, with ways of life, customs and creeds as luxuriant as tropical nature. Indians from other parts of the country know next to nothing about the Malabar Coast—about Kerala and, especially, about its Malayalam region.

The very components of a person's name are different in this southern country. They comprise not just the "first" and "second" names, as, for instance, "Jawaharlal Nehru." Indian newspapers usually call the subject of this biography Mr. Menon. That is incorrect. His name is Krishna Menon. But all of this calls for a word of explanation.

The child received the name of Lord Krishna the Swift, one of the most beloved figures in the overcrowded Hindu pantheon. Legend holds that the skin of the god Krishna was dark, and that is what his name denotes. The range of skin colors in India is very wide—like everything else—and goes from the fairest to the darkest. But irrespective of the hue of the skin, the Indians' racial traits qualify them as being white. Yet Indians are highly color-conscious, although reluctant to

concede it. They talk ecstatically, for instance, about the "golden skin" of the god Indra, who is driven by golden horses in his golden car. One of the first questions when a child is born is, "How about the skin?"

The boy's skin color was dark—the dominant color in the Indian South. Just to prove that darkness and greatness can blend, dark-skinned babies are frequently invested with the name of the Lord Krishna. It was in one of the most famous songs of religious ecstasy that Krishna expressed the substance of the Hindu creed—in the *Bhagavad-Gita* ("Song of the Blessed One"), which forms a portion of the epic *Mahabharata*. The admonition of this beloved god was to adhere to the life-sustaining doctrine of the *bakhti yoga*, loving devotion, fused with *kama yoga*, resolute action.

Fulfillment is within ourselves, the Lord Krishna proclaimed:

The dust hides the mirror
The smoke hides the flame.
The sight of the outer eye
Blinds the insight of the soul,
Behold me, thy true self,
With the spirit's eye.

Such noble sentiments were expected to spring from the hearts of boys who were endowed with the sanctified name of Krishna.

The rest of the name of the boy is explained by the customs of the Hindu community into which he happened to be born.

He was born into a matriarchal Malayalam society, where family succession is determined by a system named *Marumakkatayam* in which the offspring trace their descent from a common ancestress. The subcaste into which Krishna Menon

was born is known as Nayar (spelled in half a dozen different ways, as, for instance, Nair).

It is a part of the lush complexity of Indian life that the exact place of the Nayars in the Hindu hierarchy is a subject of dispute. The designations of the castes and the subcastes, and their numbers, are also subject to many interpretations. Some people say that the Nayars are a subcaste. Others maintain that they are a caste. If the former view is sustained, then there are more than two thousand castes in India. These, in turn, cluster around the four great caste-groups: *Brahman* (also written Brahmin), the priests; *Kshattriya*, the warriors; *Vaisya*, the people engaged in mercantile and agricultural pursuits; and *Sudra*, the artisan and laboring classes. Once the Nayars were a martial race—now they are peaceful, “except,” as someone once remarked, “for Krishna Menon.” Members of the caste maintain that they belong to the warriors, others say that they belong to the artisans, the lowest caste. Below them are the “outcastes,” whom the Indians today call the children of God—*harijans*.

The joint family of the Nayars—Krishna Menon’s group—is known as the *thwarwad*. It consists of brothers and sisters, as well as the latter’s descendants along the female line. The eldest male member is called *karnawan*, “he who does things,” or the “originator”; he is a kind of major-domo, the manager of the joint household. According to the rules of tradition, married male members do not live with their spouses, but only visit them in the maternal abode. The *karnawan*, however, is permitted to bring his wife and children into the joint family. Provided the other male members are self-supporting and living apart from the *tharwad*, they are allowed to settle down with their wives.

In such matriarchal communities it is the women who own

property—at least in theory. However, times are changing rapidly on the Malabar Coast, and male aggressiveness is forcing the family system into the patriarchal mold. The joint households are being split up, and the common property is being apportioned among their members.

The first word in the name of the newborn baby, Vengalil, indicated such a matriarchal joint family. The second name—Krishnan—indicated the name of the nominal guardian, normally a maternal uncle. Menon was the name of his clan, a subdivision of the caste.

There are countless Menons on the Malabar Coast, mostly unrelated to one another. Menons play important roles in the Kerala state legislature. They are also members of the state government and of the judiciary.

The father's name was almost entirely different: Komath Krishna Kurup. There again the first word designated the name of his presumed ancestress, through the joint family in the matrilineal tradition. Kurup was the name of the clan or of the caste subdivision.

The mother's name was Lakshmi Kutty Amma. Lakshmi is the name of the goddess of beauty and wealth, created by the gods when churning a sea of milk so as to produce a beverage of immortality. Kutty is a pet name—something like “darling little girl.” “Amma” means literally “mother,” and may be employed to designate either a married or an unmarried woman.

When asked about his caste, Krishna Menon reacts with an impatient wave of his hand. “What does it matter?” Yet it mattered greatly in his youth, and matters much even now. The caste was originally a mutual-aid society, a kind of guild, and it made much sense. Its members felt secure within its protective walls. Eventually, it became a curse which en-

tomed Indian society in the unfathomable caverns of inflexible system. When she can shake off the thralldom of the caste system, India's real independence will dawn. And that may take a long, long time.

The grip of the caste is especially forceful upon the countryside, where members of the same group are held together by iron-bound customs. In such a society boy marries girl because they belong to the same group, and love is an "also-ran." Woe betide the prospective nonconformist who dares to buck the elemental force of custom.

The Land of the Dravidians

Krishna Menon's native tongue is Malayalam, one of the important southern languages spoken on the subcontinent. It belongs to the Dravidian family of languages, those spoken by the ancient group of people who have inhabited the subcontinent since before the time—thousands of years ago—when the Indo-European-speaking peoples pushed across the highest mountains of the world in the North. It was these aggressive Indo-Europeans who imposed their caste system upon the indigenous population—the Dravidians among them—so as to set themselves apart in privileged groups.

Malayalam itself is a comparatively new offshoot of another Dravidian tongue, Tamil, which, in turn, has been enriched by a liberal sprinkling of Indo-European languages from the North. It is no particular advantage in India to spring from a Dravidian stock. The bulk of the people speak Indo-European languages, the most important of which is Hindi, expected to be the official language of the country in years to come. Krishna Menon speaks none of India's northern tongues.

Krishna Menon's birthplace on the Malabar Coast can best be introduced by looking at his neighbors in his youth, their ways of life and creeds. That world in the deep South consists of a large number of ethnic types, fascinating to observe, all but impossible to know, because each group lives in its airtight compartment. The lushness of the mores of the people reflects the luxuriance of nature in the Indian South.

At the head of the list are the Brahmans, of course. The Nambudri Brahmans are the shining stars of the Malabar Coast, and not even this supremely caste-conscious region has encountered a more exclusive set. When Krishna Menon was young, these Brahmans were surrounded by impenetrable taboos. Their fear of contamination by the touch, and even the look, of the less privileged masses was immense. Thus they were called *asuryam-pasya*—not to be seen even by the sun.

Only the oldest or the two oldest sons are allowed to marry, in this caste, while the others are to live in celibacy. The Nambudri Brahmans imposed this restriction upon themselves so as to prevent the fragmentation of the ancestral land. Such a fragmentation would have thrust members of these thoroughbred families into poverty, which would have been inconsistent with their exalted status as Brahmans.

Another group, called the Ezhavas, produced one of India's most enlightened religious leaders, Narayana Guru Swami, who proclaimed a monotheistic faith: "One Caste, One Religion, One God." Thus do inflexible social institutions create their antithesis of nonconformity.

The People in the Hills

Young Krishna Menon may never have seen the hill people of the surrounding country, except perhaps on market days. Even today the nomadic Pandarams are untouched by modern life. Living in the jungle, they shun civilization, sustaining themselves with their bows and arrows. They live in caves and in the hollows of trees, deriving their subsistence from the forest fauna and flora. The honey and wax they produce are bartered for salt and matches.

Not much more advanced than the Pandarams are the Uralis, who haunt the jungles of the Cardamom Hills. More than the others, they may be seen at village markets of the coastal plains. Their houses are of bamboo and forest grass. They live on the herbs and roots they scratch out of the soil with their chopping knives during a part of the year, while during the other part they live on rice. There are settled farmers among them, too, who raise paddy rice, which they barter for city cloth.

The Ullatans form another hill community in the neighborhood, and they, too, belong to the bow and arrow set. Their method of marrying off their girls is uncommon. The young lady sits alone in the palm-leaf hut, while hopeful contenders whirl around it, hurling their bamboo poles into its walls. The dance over, the girl grips one of the poles, and its owner becomes her fiancé.

Another hill tribe, that of the Mudrans, long ago anticipated the modern experiment in "companionate marriage." First, the approval of the parents is obtained, then the boy and girl withdraw into a cave to find out if they will be compatible on the marriage couch. They remain there for a few weeks,

then return to their village, announcing their will. If the experiment fails, they have another chance to try.

The Moplahs and Others

The Moplahs have played a special role in this congeries of exotic groups. It was particularly so in Krishna Menon's youth. They are Moslems, worshiping one God, Allah, and performing Islam's rites. However, they appear not to have penetrated into this region from the North and Northwest as did most of the Moslems of India. They claim that their ancestors crossed the great sea from Arabia many centuries ago. From time to time they turned on their Hindu neighbors in uncontrollable outbursts of religious fanaticism. These devotees held that the gates of the heavens would be opened to them more readily if they could account for the murder of a large number of "infidel dogs." Today some of them are clamoring for the establishment of an Indian state of their own, which they want to call Moplahistan—Moplah Land.

This part of India has been open to western influence in modern times much longer than other parts of the subcontinent. The Christians of St. Thomas, also known as Syrian Christians, claim to belong to the oldest organized Catholic church in the world. They also claim that the founder of their rite was one of Christ's twelve apostles, St. Thomas. Jesus told Thomas to go to India and preach the Gospel there. He refused, and thereupon Christ sold this "Doubting Thomas" to an Indian prince, just then on a visit to Jerusalem. Thomas was transported to India, and there he had a change of heart. Filled with the spirit of his mission, he founded a church and baptized the prince, his master. The church is said

to be the site of the Cathedral of St. Thomas in Madras, today. Subsequently Thomas was martyred, and is said to be buried there.

The spirit of restraint Indians have imposed upon themselves has affected the Christians of the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts of Southern India. They, too, are faced with all kinds of taboos. Marriage among the Syrian Christians, for instance, is forbidden within seven generations on the father's side, and five generations among the mother's kin.

The Malabar Coast has also its "Black Jews" and "White Jews." Their traditions hold that they have lived in Southern India since the sixth century B.C.—the date of the destruction of the First Temple. Documentary evidence seems to sustain the view that the Jews of this coast have had established communities here for many centuries. A companion of Vasco da Gama recorded the fact that the coastal Jews were ruled by their own elders. Many members of their congregations were master craftsmen in shipbuilding. In recent times their numbers have been waning, as they have been moving to Israel.

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CHAPTER II

The Long Shadow of the Past

About Krishna Menon's Reticences

"I HAVE READ IN HISTORY of an incident in my own home town"—Krishna Menon said at the United Nations in a statement on October 23, 1959—" . . . in my own home town, where I was born, Calicut, where the emissary of a great country landed on that coast in 1498 and visited the ruler of that time who showered him with presents and honors. The result was that he took away twelve inhabitants of Calicut to his home country and we never heard of them afterwards."

Official government publications give his place of birth as Calicut, others as "Kozhikode, Malabar." Calicut and Kozhikode are synonymous. The second name seems to have been the original one, simplified by the British into Calicut. Yet Krishna Menon was not, in fact, born there. His true birthplace, Tellicherry, is some forty miles up the coast. This discrepancy between what the reference books say and what he has told me himself calls for a word of explanation.

All the information about Krishna Menon's youth is highly tentative. He is secretive about it, and the sporadic information elicited from him is as hesitant as it is sketchy. Why do the reference books fail to convey the correct information about his place of birth? Because—as an assistant asserts—Tellicherry is unknown to the outside world, while Calicut is known. But Kozhikode's name is little known as yet in many parts of India, too. The answer to this comment is a non-committal shrug.

The Krishna Menon of today maintains that he has few recollections of his past, has no diaries of his youth and that these things are insignificant, anyway. He says that what is important is what a man does, not where he was born.

Can one obtain detailed information about his early youth on the Malabar Coast? His family in Tellicherry was not sufficiently important to have aroused widespread interest. Also, traditional Indian society is so structured that people are known mainly to members of their in-groups. We have seen that the Malabar Coast has a particularly fragmented social structure. People not belonging to one's own group might as well be a thousand miles away. Besides, how is one to find neighbors who were adults when Krishna Menon was still a child? The average life expectancy in the India of those days was twenty-three years.

Why the Secrecy?

An explanation is hazarded, right at the outset, as to the motives of Krishna Menon's secretiveness about his background. Is it explained by an unhappy childhood? By tyrannical parents? By the troubles of a born rebel in the coils of a tradition-bound society? By the belief that the place of

his physical birth did not coincide with the place of his intellectual awakening?

The explanation seems to be that this representative of the revolt of the oriental masses against the occidental claim of supremacy is a "westerner" both in his hereditary inclinations and in his philosophical orientation. Today, he refuses to speak his native Malayalam in public. Nor has he ever learned any other Indian tongue. The language he speaks, and that language alone, is English, which is the language of his thoughts. He grew to manhood on the spiritual and intellectual sustenance of western man.

At the same time, Krishna Menon exhibits a strange ambivalence toward his native land. A generation of life and work in the West has not been able to loosen the grip of his home on his emotions. Although he is a westerner, he is strongly critical of many phases of his own loyalties. He is in human bondage to two cultures—the East and the West. He takes his revenge on the West by constantly chastising it, and thus punishing himself, too. A westerner in his attachments, he feels that because of the grip of the past on him he belongs to two worlds, and this is tantamount to saying that he hovers on the peripheries of both.

At the Foot of the Ghats

Tellicherry has today a population of some 36,000—and it had a smaller population when Krishna Menon was young. It is a pretty town, undulating on the broad waves of hills at the foot of the Western Ghats, as they slope down to the sea in gentle ripples. It is situated on the Madras Railway, indicating that it has been in touch with the world—and that cannot be said of much of India. It was not an important

town in Krishna Menon's youth, and is not particularly important today. A trading center of minor importance, a small seaport, it was visited by fishermen and some of the people from the hills. In his youth the ships were protected only by a natural breakwater of rocks, and vessels were able to anchor only out at sea, a couple of miles away. Today the town has a sea wall and a pier. The port is thus available all year round, even during the monsoon season.

To protect the town from the predatory hosts streaming southward toward India's golden coast, an old fort was built north of the town many centuries ago. A mud wall encircling the community afforded modest protection in the distant past. The young boy, Krishna, was thus reminded of the ghosts haunting the history of the Malabar Coast, where the pungent fragrance of spices was mixed with the odor of the blood of fighting men.

Krishna Menon's father was a lawyer, a small man in a small town. His mother was always a shadowy figure. She died at the age of thirty-eight, which was not very young in this land of early deaths. The fact that his sisters numbered four was a tragic fate for them, a tragedy for the family. The Indian institution of marriage is built upon dowries, and no legislation has been able to remove this bane in recent times. How could a middle-class, small-town lawyer find the means of marrying off four daughters? And, indeed, two of them were never able to find husbands, wasting away unhappy spinsters. The other two did get married, and it was their husbands who died young.

This beautiful land is little different from the rest of India, in that it has been constantly ravaged by pestilence and plague. In the very year of Krishna Menon's birth, a bubonic plague epidemic swept the North, where millions of dead

bodies were collected in death's grim harvest. The greatest killer was malaria, merely a nuisance in the West these days, but a deadly disease in the East. Then there was the dreadful assortment of apocalyptic ailments—yellow fever, typhus, typhoid fever, tuberculosis and a virulent collection of intestinal diseases.

One of these intestinal afflictions was bilharziasis, which the victims acquired in stagnant waters—the canals, lagoons and sluggish brooks. Tiny snails broke open the skins of the victims, working their way into their intestinal organs and virtually hollowing them out until the sufferers became empty shells, walking, reeling skeletons wafting off into death in a merciful trance.

Many people were also subject to the specifically Indian disease which people called *kala azar*, the black affliction. It was brought about in an anomalous way. The bedbug was the causative agent—a special type of bug. However, its bite was not fatal in itself. What was fatal was the victim's frantic rubbing of poison into a self-inflicted wound which caused an agonizing death.

Two sisters of Krishna Menon's died of tuberculosis when they were still young.

Yet the Malabar Coast was still better off than most of the rest of the subcontinent. There the monsoon was more dependable, especially on the verdant windward slope of the Western Ghats. Having more natural resources, the inhabitants were able to develop more diversified and imaginative ways of scratching a livelihood out of the hillside slopes, the jungle and the sea. And yet even there, famine struck from time to time. The year of Krishna Menon's birth was not too bad, and deaths by starvation were not too numerous. But the years before, and two years later, were truly tragic.

Five million people died of starvation at the turn of the century, official figures admit. But, then, there were too many deaths in famine years for them to be counted. Many of the people died in inaccessible areas, with no roads. The survivors were too famished themselves to render a true account of the tragedy. In the same years some parts of India produced surplus food, but transportation was not always adequate to provide the deficiency regions with the surplus of other areas. That was one of the reasons why people—such as Krishna Menon's father, for instance—rebelled against the British rule.

Family Life on the Malabar Coast

How did the family of Krishna Menon live? Inhabitants of the region do not consider questions about family life within the legitimate range of the interviewer's interest.

The people of Krishna Menon were pious Hindus, we are told, performing their rites, listening to the sanctified words of the Hindu classics. Religion in India is not conserved in a separate compartment, for holiday use, while the weekdays are for business as usual—religion for the lips, and business for the hands and brains. The Hindu creed suffuses all aspects of everyday life. And so it was also in the home of Komath Krishna Kurup and Lakshmi Kutty Amma, the parents of the boy Krishna.

Their everyday life was performed within the framework of certain rites, impinging upon the individual's social and economic concerns. The prescriptive duties were presumed to be endowed with eternal validity, guiding the steps of every person, keeping him apart, if he was a Nayar, from his neighbors of the other communities, the Brahmans, the Mop-

lahs, the Syrian Christians and the Jews, "Black" and "White." The prevailing intellectual climate discouraged critical thinking, except as the neighbors' ways were concerned. In that one respect, criticism ran wild.

Many an evening was spent—in literate homes such as Krishna Menon's—around the kerosene lamp, reading passages from the Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. These stories about gods and godlike heroes filled the spiritual universe of the Hindus, claspings them together in spite of the vast differences in their languages, traditions, castes and ways of regional life.

Tradition-bound families on this coast—and in other parts of India, too—have always been in the habit of making pilgrimages to holy cities on the banks of sanctified streams, to purge their bodies of the stain of sin. Few people on the Malabar Coast could hope to get purified in the waters of the holiest of all rivers, the Ganga (Ganges), in the shadow of the ramparts of the sacred city of Benares, at the most auspicious moments of the year. But they had their own sanctified streams. Also, they encountered *gurus*, teachers, from whose inspired lips they heard hallowed incantations that soothed them as if the sweetest music.

Not only the spirit but also the body was nourished in the young boy's middle-class Tellicherry home. The most important staple was then, as it is now, rice, and also tapioca, from the cassava, which the region produces in large quantities. This steaming coast turns also to the sea for its food—the sea in which its beauties are reflected. The people who can afford to have more than one meal a day have *kanji* for their breakfast—rice boiled in water, a kind of rice soup. Other important staples are *ghee*—melted butter—and yoghurt, chillies and curries; also occasional scraps of meat, except for

the devout Brahmans, who live mainly on the products of the soil.

Sickness is, in these regions, an inseparable companion. The medical system of the region is *Ayurvedic*—*ayur* meaning “life,” and *vedic* being a reference to the Hindu Veda classics. This is not the part of the world where doctors can expect to acquire affluence. Cures consist of traditional household remedies, transmitted from generation to generation.

A Young Boy at Work

The instruction at the local school was supplemented by paternal exhortations. Krishna Menon liked history more than any other subject, and his greatest delight was to learn about the people who had been the rulers of India. The history of the British also fascinated the young boy. Yet his books did not tell him enough about the annals of his own native Malayalam on the Malabar Coast. The rulers of the country were the British. Tellicherry was situated in the Madras Presidency of British India. Although the British maintained their supremacy all over the vast subcontinent, they did let a large number of princes continue to rule in their domains, some of which were larger than many European countries, some of which were very small. There was one of these native principalities, a rather important one, wedged into the Madras Presidency: Travancore.

One thing Krishna Menon liked to do more than anything else—to read. He got some books from the school, and also from the friends of his family. He scraped pennies together and with them bought little tracts, instead of spending his money on sweets.

The books in the schools were provided by the English,

and did not contain much information about the struggle of the English people against their sovereigns for individual human rights. But they did mention the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Rights, the Reform Acts passed by the English Parliament, the Chartist movement and some of the other endeavors of the British to free themselves from their greedy lords. Krishna would have liked to know more about them.

Krishna Menon was born into the world of a living legend: Her Gracious Majesty, Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, of the Britannic Territories Beyond the Seas, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India. Her Diamond Jubilee was celebrated in the year of Krishna's birth, 1897—the sixtieth year of her reign. Hundreds of millions of her subjects had never known any other sovereign, and her empire extended to all parts of the globe.

It was a happy anniversary celebration. The British Empire was the custodian of *Pax Britannica* and, indeed, the guardian of the peace of the world, at the very apex of its power. British countinghouses were filled with the currencies of many lands, her warehouses were gorged with goods from all continents, and British vessels flew the proud Union Jack on all the seas. India herself was a major center of British might, firmly and—so people thought—irrevocably fitted into the realm, the most dazzling jewel in the Queen's diadem. This India of Queen Victoria was, indeed, the pivot upon which the might of the empire rested.

The history of India was recalled in connection with the jubilee celebration. As Krishna Menon looked around, immersing himself in the reading of chronicles, his mind was attracted to India's past.

The Road to Calicut

It was about 1910 that Krishna Menon's family moved from Tellicherry to Calicut, and there the young boy found himself in the midst of history.

Today Calicut has a population of some 160,000; then it was much smaller, perhaps half its present size. It was the headquarters of the Malabar district, which, in turn, was a part of the Madras Presidency, an important portion of British India, over which the authorities of the United Kingdom ruled directly. In Calicut, Krishna was confronted with India's "British problem," and also with his own problem.

In all India there was no other place like Calicut. It was through Calicut that the West had rushed into India from beyond the seas; it had been the landfall of Vasco da Gama, and other seafarer-adventurers. Thus it was the window through which the East and West had been scrutinizing each other.

Longer than any other region of the subcontinent, the region around Calicut had been exposed to Europe's direct influence. This represented both an advantage and a drawback for the people of the town. This Malabar Coast, clustering around Calicut—and the extended region, known today as Kerala—has long had the highest literacy rate in India, because of this western exposure. It opened up the region to the world, made the indigenous population meet Europeans, encouraged not a few of them, taking their chances, to leave their overcrowded country and go overseas, to Burma and to South Africa.

The area has not only the highest literacy rate, but also the highest disaffection rate of young people—"angry young men," we would call them today. Krishna Menon became

such an angry young man. Illiteracy breeds stagnation and apathy. Literacy, in such an environment, breeds expectation, and the nagging sensation of frustration.

Calicut offered other reasons for frustration, too. The place had long since ceased to be a window on the outside world. Trade had shifted from this "pioneer port" to superior locations with larger harbors and more highly developed hinterlands. It had moved across the peninsula to Madras, on the Coromandel Coast, facing the Bay of Bengal. Above all, trade had moved to Bombay, the new gateway of India, and also to the mushrooming city of Calcutta, in monsoon-scoured Bengal, with its teaming hinterland of the Gangetic Plains.

Even so, Calicut did retain some trade, and thus continued to be in touch with the western world, although the fabric which publicized its name—calico—was no longer a basic staple. It did remain an entrepôt of spices, coconut products, lumber and coffee. Today it also has its own produce of perfumes, textiles and soap.

According to the information he furnished on the "Form of Enquiry" of the London School of Economics years later, he attended the Municipal Secondary School and Brennen College in his hometown of Tellicherry; the Native High School in Calicut; and Zamorin College—named for the former native potentates of the Malabar Coast.

The guideline for young Indians' studies had been laid down by Lord Cavendish Bentinck, Governor-General of India, many years before: "The great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India."

Krishna Menon was still in Tellicherry when he heard Lord Curzon, the top official of the Indian pyramid, proclaim in his sonorously majestic way: "To me the message is

carved in granite, it is hewn out of the rock of doom—that our work is righteous and that it will endure.”

Some Are Born Great

In Tellicherry, Krishna Menon had become acquainted with the lower subdivisions of British India—the *pargana*, the fiscal district; the *thana*, the police division; and the *tahsil*, the subdistrict. He knew that the title of the top official in his own Malabar district was “Collector,” a reminder that India was mainly a fiscal asset to the British. He heard also about the “home charges,” representing the funds to be remitted from India to Britain for the expenses of the I.C.S. (Indian Civil Service), as also for the purchase of those stores unobtainable on the peninsula, and for the interest on the loans the United Kingdom had incurred. He heard the British say that these sums were small contrasted with the benefits India received from them. But the boy Krishna Menon followed the local custom of referring to them as “the drain.”

Since Calicut was the headquarters of a district of British India, the boy Krishna Menon was introduced there directly to the British *Raj*, or reign. Ruling the vast country was a tiny layer of British officials, not more than some thirteen hundred on the top level. They appeared to be decent people, these British, but they were aloof, so very aloof. The boy found a French characterization of the British rule of India in one of the many books he perused: “Just, but not friendly.”

The British officials were pink-cheeked and well-fed, in the midst of the underfed masses. Was this because they were battenning on his land, or were the people of the world divided into two classes: the sated and the hungry? If you were

born in India the odds were that you were hungry; in Britain, you had enough to eat.

The British he encountered looked solid, as if they had been hewn of granite. What gave these people the strength to master the Indian universe? What filled them with so much self-confidence?

He must have heard an increasing number of Indians declare, "Britain has deprived us of our freedom." Years later he said, "I dreamt of the freedom of India even as a boy." If he did, he was far ahead of his time, because the British appeared to be part of an immovable design on the subcontinent. It looked as if they had always been there, and were to remain there forever. Their rule was supported not only by the apathy of the people, but also by the self-interest of the more than five hundred local princes whose domains were protected by the British. And, too, there were the *babus*, the Indian officials in British service, giving themselves airs, siding with the master race.

Yet there had been stirrings of something akin to national sentiment up in the North. There had been in existence for several years an organization called the "Indian National Congress." People usually referred to it as the Congress, and later, as the Congress Party. Strangely, it was the creation of an Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume, who had suggested that the "most cultured and enlightened minds of India" take the initiative in forming an organization for self-improvement. However, the precocious Krishna Menon knew that the Congress, as it was then constituted, intended to stay loyal to Britain. Had it not been established as a ruse to deflect India's genuine aspirations for self-government into innocuous party channels? The first president of the Congress, W. C. Bonnerjee, had declared a few years before: "It is under the civilized

rule of the Queen and the people of England that we meet here together, hindered by none, freely allowed to speak our minds without the least fear. Such a thing is possible under British rule and under British rule only."

A Young Boy's Passion

Calicut stimulated Krishna Menon's interest in the history of India. Now he was mature enough to meditate on the role of the subcontinent in its historical setting. He asked not only about the record of the past but too about the possibilities of the future. Step by step, he acquainted himself with the history of his part of India. He learned about the Phoenicians who had sailed the waters leading to India thousands of years before. In the writings of Pliny the Elder, the Roman scholar, he read about an *emporium* on the Malabar Coast with which the West had been in contact, and which may have been Calicut.

He learned that, according to Christian and Jewish lore, the southern Kerala village of Puvar may have been the ancient Ophir to which King Solomon dispatched his trading ships. The contemporaries of the divine Augustus of Rome were said to have been the builders of a shrine at Kodungalur, on the Malabar Coast.

Young Krishna Menon learned that *Srivazhum Kode*—"Abode of Prosperity"—had been the name of the portion of Kerala known today as Travancore. This may have seemed to Krishna proof that there had once been prosperity in what was a poorly fed country.

There was a tendency in the young Krishna Menon to overstate the greatness of India. This was particularly true in regard to his hero, Asoka the Great, of the Maurya dynasty, King of Magadha more than two centuries before the

Christian era. How Asoka attracted him—this unique monarch who had sought fulfillment in conquest and bloodshed, and had found it in the healing labors of peace. The more he became engrossed in the history of the Malabar Coast, the more young Krishna Menon felt that the solution was not war. How could blood cleanse man of his sins, which were at the source of the evil? And why should so many people worship the aggressive and the ruthless, and not the constructive spiritual values? He was not aggressive in those days, this young Krishna Menon of Calicut. On the contrary, he was a very shy boy, deeply thoughtful, critical in an uncritical age, looking for answers in an unquestioning environment. And he tried to find the answers by reading still more books.

With increasing interest he read about the Moslem penetration of India—wave after wave, from across the mountains in the North, from unknown lands of fathomless deserts, and from areas of exotic customs. The attraction of India, the Land of the Spices, had been immense. Some of the Moslems must even have crossed the seas from Arabia. And all had carried with them the creed of Allah. It was around their creed that their world revolved, and they were intoxicated with it. Religion was the Moslem law and it was also the cause of slaughters. As Krishna saw it, the Moslems had taken to killing the people of other creeds because the spices of the Malabar Coast were costly and Europe's grandees paid for them in gold. They had set up their shrines, these Moslems, and also had constructed their execution grounds for those who did not worship God in their way. Their strong beliefs had prevailed over those of the more easy-going Hindus.

Thus—young Krishna Menon pondered—in India two of the world's great religions were juxtaposed. The Hindus,

inhabiting a world crowded with myriad manifestations of divinity, rubbed elbows with the Moslems, who entrusted themselves to their one God, a jealous ruler. The sanctification of the one was the abomination of the other, and thus the seeds of communal strife had been sown.

The destroyers, however, had destroyed themselves, in Krishna Menon's languid South, thrown back by the resurgence of Hindu life, which proclaimed its victory with Vijayanagar, the City of Victory, around which arose a new Hindu kingdom that was to resist the erosion of time until the sixteenth century.

"Winds and Waves on the Side of the Ablest"

Krishna's new home, Calicut, was the scene of a new re-incarnation of the southland. There it was that Vasco da Gama succeeded where the great Columbus had failed. The Portuguese navigator set sail for the East—instead of the West—and reached the land of occidental dreams. He it was who pried India's gates open. Christianity now swept into the land—but did not progress very far (although it accounted for the higher literacy rate of the coast, and also for poverty and oppression). Whatever religious fanatics touched—Krishna Menon meditated—became stained with blood. What was it that the pious people wanted? Cinnamon was what they wanted, ginger and cloves. What they said they wanted was to save souls.

The Europeans ran into the ignorant complacency of the local ruler, the *zamorin*, who was blinded by his own greed. He needed coral and scarlet for his wives, silver and gold for his treasure trove. The Portuguese departed with spices and

gems, returned for more, and established their position with coral and scarlet for the insatiable *zamorin*.

They founded the first European factory—and it was in Calicut. Krishna could now follow the progress of “imperialism,” with which he became so deeply concerned in his adult life. This was the starting point of another era. Pope Alexander VI was besought by Manuel I (called also “Emanuel the Fortunate”) to issue a papal bull recognizing him as the “Lord of Navigation, Conquest and Trade of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India.” Manuel was also to get Brazil into the bargain.

Meanwhile new waves of conquest were cresting the sandy beaches, assailing the land of the fragrant spices. It was the restless Moslems, with their dynamic creed, who overcame apathy in the united forces of Bijapur, Ahmednagar, and Golconda, turning the Hindus’ vainglorious City of Victory into the City of Defeat. Topping their wave of conquest were other waves, sweeping the victors into limbo. New conquerors came, the Kings of Mysore, and the *naiks* of Madura. Every inch of the shore was bathed in blood.

The Portuguese adventurers’ attention was diverted to quicker profits in the fabulous land of gold, Eldorado, beyond the Ocean Sea. Dutch navigators tried to continue the work begun by the Portuguese, but remained only a brief time. Eventually they found their own Eldorado, in the myriad islands of the equatorial waters of the Far East.

Whose Merchants Are Princes

Now came the turn of Britain’s merchants, more persistent than the Iberians and the restless Dutch. Again it was spices, gems and gold that attracted the “Governor and Company

of the Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies." Boldness helped them to advance to the exalted ranks of Emperors and Kings.

Southern India—Krishna Menon's home—made a last attempt to salvage its integrity. The men of destiny this time were Haidar Ali and Tipu Sahib, native potentates who became "Great Rulers," *maharajahs*. In their attempt to protect their land they helped to destroy it, practicing a scorched-earth policy. Thus the vineyards and sandalwood trees that had fringed Calicut were destroyed. Tipu Sahib smote the town itself, because it had not rallied to his cause. He forced the remnants of the people into captivity and seized the crown of Mysore. By the sword he lived and by the sword he died. His domains were partitioned, and it was then that the British introduced their *Pax* into the land.

The main concern of the new conquerors was the welfare of the United Kingdom. They were intelligent enough to realize that a fertile India would help Britain to prosper. Their policy was imperialism, to be sure, but it was infinitely less destructive than that of their predecessors. The reluctant admiration of Krishna Menon for the British may be traced to his readings in the history of Britain's conduct on the Coast.

They introduced improvements in the course of time, moving slowly, never precipitately or in anger. There were exceptions, to be sure, but the young student of Malabar's history was able to overlook many of them. Harnessing rivers, the British brought water to the thirsty soil. They launched even more ambitious projects, as the decades became generations and then centuries. They helped conservation to take hold on the slopes of the Malabar Ghats. They encouraged better methods of farming. They built roads and canals, and created a network of railway lines. Their main concern was

strategy, of course, the retention of their grip on nodal areas. While much of the Indian vastness remained inaccessible, they did manage to create a transportation grid. Hospitals and schools were also built, although never enough to satisfy the gnawing need.

Not all their improvements were constructive. The angry young men of those days—Krishna Menon included—felt that the British were also responsible for inexcusable shortcomings. In promoting the interests of their own industries, they had all but destroyed India's native handicrafts. The main beneficiary of most of the improvements had been British capital. Also, the British had perpetuated certain inequalities by introducing the system of parasitic tax-collectors, *zamindars*, who sequestered the land. The poor had become poorer and the rich richer in India, just as that bewhiskered prophet of doomsday, Karl Marx, had predicted. Too, the British had perpetuated the iniquitous rule of certain princes, whom they needed for their game of divide and rule.

Seldom smiling, young Krishna was torn between two emotions. He was resentful against the British for what they had done to his land. Yet he could not help admiring them. This ambivalent attitude toward the British was to accompany him throughout his later career. He was frustrated, withal, because he was resentful. Now that he had eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he felt a bitter taste in his mouth. He rationalized his own lack of opportunities into the cause of India. Greater freedom for his native land would have entailed greater opportunities for him. His mind was full of rebellious thoughts. He wanted to know what had made the English so self-assured. He turned to their seminal books.

New Thoughts

Historical narrative alone did not satisfy him as he matured. He wanted also to know about the forces that released and inhibited collective action. What were the thoughts behind the deeds? Or did the deeds come first, followed by rationalizations? No, he decided, in the beginning was the Thought. He loved to play with thoughts, and also with words, rich, multicolored words. He also wanted to probe into the mysteries of reason. Above all, he wanted to find the inner springs of the British people's struggle for self-expression in their own environment. He wanted to become better acquainted with their parliamentary system. What was the soil like out of which it had grown?

He displayed great gifts in finding the sources of the birth-pangs of thought. One of his great discoveries was John Locke. Here was the Englishman who had wrested the fate of man from the grip of superhuman powers, placing it firmly in his own hands. Here was the man who had revealed to the world that the fate of human creatures was not written in the stars—predetermined by extraterrestrial forces—but was shaped by their own efforts. Man was the molder of his own destiny. Was this the explanation of the awe-inspiring self-assurance of the English? Was this the moving force behind the success of the West, which had enslaved the fate-worshippers outside the purview of European civilization?

Krishna Menon's next discovery was John Stuart Mill, who became one of his favorite authors. He read and reread Mill's immortal essay "On Liberty," which (buttressed by Locke) greatly helped him to support his germinating idea about the deep motivating force of man's search for self-expression being the most effective way of releasing his po-

tentialities. From Mill, Krishna Menon learned the memorable words, "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of the civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."

And further: "If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

Krishna Menon turned to Karl Marx, too, and Friedrich Engels, as well as to other Socialist writers, finding what he thought revealing insights, ones applicable to conditions in India. He and his people, as he saw it, were the victims of imperialism, in spite of all the improvements the British had introduced. Was imperialism the corollary of capitalism in its old age?

He began to compare what he had learned from the great British writers with the values of his own land, embodied in its classical literature and the teaching of its sages. And he was to reach some radical conclusions—but that was to be much later.

The King Is Dead, Long Live the King

Krishna Menon was still very young when Edward VII, King of Great Britain and Emperor of India, told his subjects on the subcontinent: "Important classes among you, representing ideas that have been encouraged by the British rule, claim equality of citizenship and a greater share in legislation and government. The political satisfaction of such claims will strengthen, not impair, existing authority and power."

The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, so named after the

secretary of state for India and the viceroy, followed this statement, introducing a measure of suffrage into the Indian legislative councils. To be sure, only a few thousand people out of hundreds of millions acquired the right to vote, and the councils' prerogative was limited to giving advice, but it was a beginning, albeit a modest one. For the first time, the basic principle was recognized, paving the way for further reforms. Young Krishna Menon could not foresee at the time that the Morley-Minto Reforms signaled the beginning of his own political career.

King Edward died, and George V ascended the throne, when Krishna Menon was thirteen. *Le Roi est mort, vive le Roi*. The British government contemplated a double coronation, one in Westminster Abbey, the other in India. However, misgivings were expressed on this score. India was now stirring, and what if a fanatical nationalist were to make an attempt on the monarch's life? The ruler himself swept aside these fears and proceeded to India, accompanied by Queen Mary.

All the pomp and panoply of Britain at the zenith of her might were displayed at the coronation Durbar, in December, 1911. Great empires had risen and fallen, but it seemed that the British realm was to endure forever. Krishna Menon, an adolescent in Calicut, followed these events with interest. He could not dream that he would one day become an important member of the government of an independent India.

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CHAPTER III

In Search of Wisdom

Learning in the Freshness of Youth

WHAT WAS HE TO BECOME, a teacher or a lawyer? He had turned his back on the maternal house; too much Hindu piety there, and a deeply depressed atmosphere. His eldest sister had become a fighter against sex discrimination, prevalent even in that matriarchal society. Also, there were the two sad-eyed, unmarried sisters. He was turning left and right, engaged in odd jobs. Then he turned in a new direction, toward a new philosophy and new gods. This was to be Krishna Menon's new reincarnation.

Ex Occidente Lux was his motto—as it was that of many other frustrated young sons of Mother India. The West was strong, imperious and, above all, well-fed. In the West the average life expectancy was not twenty-three years. There were no places in the West like Madras—a great metropolitan center where the death rate was higher than the birth rate, so enormously high was the infant mortality.

But was the West really so successful? What of the sham-

bles it had caused in that Great War which another generation was to know as World War I? And what of the misery it had caused with its colonial system? Already voices had been heard in the West saying that the occidental culture had run its course. Long ago Arthur Schopenhauer, the melancholy German philosopher and expounder of pessimism, had turned his attention to the East. He had dwelt upon irrationality, the unspeakable misery of life, and the seemingly aimless striving that manifested itself in the world process: "We must perceive that all willing is vain and pleasure unattainable, also that since individual existence is untrue, all individuals are identical in essence, that all are manifestations of the one world will."

The answer was oriental asceticism, and the knowledge of *nirvana*, the type of nothingness that finds its loftiest place and truest reality in the soul: *Ex Oriente Lux*. Schopenhauer had written on the fourfold roots of the principle of sufficient reason. Years later, Krishna Menon was to write his master's thesis on "An Experimental Study of the Mental Processes Involved in Reasoning." After man's will was unfolded, reason became a useful aid.

It was with such thoughts in mind that Krishna Menon joined the Theosophical Society, and his fate was linked to it for five years. The Great War was now over, and a new era seemed to beckon.

Enter Mme. Blavatsky

An American lady of Russian birth, Mme. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, together with Henry S. Olcott, of Orange, New Jersey, a former United States government official, founded the Theosophical Society in 1875. Theosophy, which was to

gain world-wide notice, called attention to the "wisdom of the East," to esoteric Buddhism, and to the Hindu scriptures. Olcott gave this description of the theosophical creed: "A theosophist is a person who, whatever his race, creed or condition, aspires to reach wisdom and beatitude by self-development."

Other expounders of the creed held that the theosophist had to subscribe to three main objectives: the promotion of the study of Aryan (Hindu) literature; the investigation of hitherto unexplained laws of nature and of the physical powers latent in man; and above all, the creation of universal brotherhood, without distinction of race or creed. The first of these objectives was subsequently modified to commit members to the study of comparative religion.

Mme. Blavatsky herself employed a more mystical language in her writings. In one of her publications, *The Secret Doctrine*, she named the following principles as the bases of theosophy: an omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable force, transcending the power of human conception, and out of range and reach of commonplace thought; the eternity of the universe *in toto* as a boundless plane; and the fundamental identity of all souls with the Universal Over-Soul, "the latter being itself an aspect of the 'Unknown Root. . .'" What she meant by the latter, she did not say.

Theosophist mysteries were often shrouded in cryptic language. The believers dwelt on *karma* (Sanskrit for "action" or "fate"), which they defined as the "unbroken sequence of cause and effect, each effect being in turn the cause of a subsequent effect."

This was somewhat different from the Buddhist *karma*, the result of action and, especially the cumulative result of a

person's deeds in one stage of his existence as controlling his fate in the next.

The theosophists also spoke of reincarnation (a part also of the Buddhist and Hindu creeds), and of astral and super-astral auras. They quoted the teachings of such sages as Pythagoras, and such neo-Pythagoreans as Apollonius of Tyana, considered a miracle-worker, who is said to have visited India. The theosophists exhorted the believers to immerse themselves in the Hindu classics, especially the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

Many young Indians joined the Society, which seemed to sanctify their inchoate aspirations, ascribing deep ethical meanings to their sacred writs. It illuminated a way that was their own, and on which they traveled amid cheers, not jeers. Because they were India's children, they were considered superior creatures in the society, and not inferiors, as was the unwritten British rule.

Because of the close connection of the creed with the wisdom of India, the society moved its headquarters there, first to Bombay, then to Adyar, in the southern part of the city of Madras, facing the Bay of Bengal. The society had about a hundred thousand dedicated disciples when Mme. Blavatsky died in the early eighteen-nineties. The anniversary of her death is remembered even now as the "White Lotus Day."

One of Mme. Blavatsky's principal disciples had been Annie Besant.

The Many Lives of Annie Besant

The First Five Lives of Annie Besant, a massive book of scholarly merit by Arthur H. Nethercot, deals only with the beginnings of a remarkable life. Annie Besant entered history

at several points. She also entered Krishna Menon's life, most decisively. She put Krishna Menon "into orbit." She also influenced awakening India's national *guru*, Mahatma (Great Soul) Gandhi—Ghandiji, as he is affectionately called—and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was to become "Mr. India" and "Panditji."

"Human tornado" and "human dynamo" were some of the terms used to describe Annie Besant. Her marriage to the respectable Reverend Frank Besant lasted only a decade. Still married to the clergyman, she joined forces with Charles Bradlaugh in a whirlwind campaign of "free thought" and birth control, at a time when mid-Victorian respectability would not stand for such nonconformity. Separated from her reverend spouse, an English court rejected this unusual British lady's petition for the custody of her own children on the grounds that an "agnostic" could not be entrusted with the guardianship of children's sensitive souls.

Annie Besant was also the co-author, with Bradlaugh, of a monograph on birth control for which the two of them were tried on a morals charge, being subsequently acquitted. She turned her back on agnosticism after a time, and became Mme. Blavatsky's disciple, a believer in the "Supreme Being" of the Theosophical Society.

It was in 1889 that Mrs. Besant joined the society; she became its president in 1907, and served in that capacity for a quarter of a century. A rich Indian disciple, Damodar K. Mavalankar, donated a large estate of 266 acres to the society. It may still be found, south of the Adyar River, in the "aristocratic" part of Madras inhabited by Europeans at the time. The estate has a large waterfront on the Bay of Bengal.

Annie Besant was also the founder of the "Home Rule" movement for India. She was honored for this in a unique

way, being elevated to the post of the presidency of the Indian National Congress, in spite of the fact that she was a Britisher, not merely a "foreigner" and the Congress opposed British rule.

Krishna Menon says he was drawn into Mrs. Besant's circle because of her Home Rule work. She selected him as one of her young assistants. At the time she was seventy-two, and he twenty-two.

Home Rule was not the sole attraction in Adyar. The pattern of Krishna Menon's life indicates another reason: his ambivalent attitude toward India. Adyar stood for the Indian's dignity. The Europeans there—headed by Annie Besant—saw values in the East which the British Raj failed to see. Adyar was also Europe in India, and Krishna Menon was tremendously attracted by the West. What was the reason? Because the West could offer more learning to him? Because of an innate snobbishness? Because Adyar was Europe in Madras? All of these and more.

Krishna Menon was not the only young Indian to be attracted to Adyar. Nehru was also one of the disciples, although not so long as Krishna Menon.

Krishna Menon's part in Adyar was not limited to Indian Home Rule. He worked on Annie Besant's weekly, *New India*, for about a year. Also, as a theosophist, he was a teacher on the estate, and he was teaching one of his favorite subjects, Indian history. He immersed himself in an extensive library on many subjects, especially on the occult sciences and yoga. He read the countless books of his amazing hostess, on such subjects as *The Perfectibility of Man*; *The Ethic of Punishment*; *The Laws of Higher Life*; *Man's Life in This and Other Worlds*; *Marriage as It Was, as It Is, and as It Should Be*; *Natural Religion Vs. Revealed Religion*; *Occult*

Chemistry; A Series of Clairvoyant Observations on Chemical Elements; Is Socialism Sound?; and many, many others.

Mrs. Besant was filled with the greatness of India, its traditions, philosophy and art. She made Krishna Menon and her other Indian protégés feel proud of their magnificent classics—the collections, she told them, of some of the most exalted thoughts in the world. She admonished them that it was not enough to consider these books as parts of their creed, but that the classics must also form the sinews of their everyday lives. She founded an Oriental Library, containing not only collections of Sanskrit and Pali manuscripts but also ancient “books” written on palm leaves.

It was she who founded Adyar College, where Krishna Menon taught. She also founded the Central Hindu College, at Benares. The seamy side of Indian life was only too well known to her. She knew that about 15 per cent of the people of the subcontinent belonged to the pariah caste. They must be afforded an opportunity, she decided, to regain their human self-confidence. She founded five schools for pariah children in Madras alone. The Madras vernacular press called her *Sannyasini Srimati Beshante*—The Holy Female Ascetic Besant.

Differing Views about Adyar

The five years Krishna Menon spent at Adyar were busy years—studying, teaching, performing administrative work, engaged in the Boy Scout movement. The Theosophical Society had world-wide ramifications, enjoyed world-wide fame, and was visited by notable people, some of whom expressed their views about it in print. These views were contradictory.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Indian independence, held

the highest opinion of Mrs. Besant's work. "When Mrs. Besant came to India," he noted, "and captivated the country, I came in close touch with her, and though we had political differences, my veneration for her suffered no abatement."

Although Gandhi himself did not join the movement, he retained great respect for it as an emanation of Hinduism at its best and as a force working to foster the brotherhood of all men. Even later, in the midst of party politics, he was impressed by the fact that so many Congress Party members—especially at the higher echelons—were also theosophists.

Annie Besant had been president of the Theosophical Society for some time when the German philosopher Count Hermann Keyserling, author of the international *inter-bellum* best-seller *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, visited Adyar. The Count was a guest of Mrs. Besant. He was critical of what he saw there.

"Ancient mistakes of humanity," he wrote, "are in all too many instances not only *not* eradicated by theosophical beliefs, but they experience new reincarnations. Today I am especially thinking of the time-honored over-valuation of diseased conditions. I have been induced to consider them in view of the attitude of the many psychologically and neurologically abnormal people who belong to the Theosophical Society. . . ."

The first who swarm around a new center of belief are, without exception, poor in spirit and superstitious, for they want, above all, to be led. Then come worthy men from practical life, generally brought to this pass by women; and only when history has faded into mythology (which, of course, can happen very rapidly in the East), when facts no longer obstruct the process of idealization, then the first eminent minds follow in the general wake. And thus it can happen that the members of

the Theosophical Society of today, if fortune is kind to them, will live in history as pioneers.

The messianic expectation prevailing at Adyar also elicited the interest of the philosopher-Count. Mrs. Besant had found the "Redeemer," and his name was Jiddu Krishnamurti, whom she called the incarnation of Maitreya, the World Teacher, the "successor of Jesus Christ."

It was in the mid-twenties, when Mrs. Besant was about eighty, that she introduced the "Lord of Mercy," Krishna-murti, as the founder of a religious order.

Harold Laski, the noted English social scientist, who entered Krishna Menon's life a few years earlier, wrote in 1926 to Oliver Wendell Holmes, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, about his meeting with Krishnamurti, as follows:

I must not forget to tell you that since I wrote last I have met God. I was at a committee for the relief of miners when Mrs. Besant turned up with a young man whom she announced as the new Redeemer. I have never met a God before and it was a little embarrassing to talk to him. I did not like to mention the weather, as a comment on continuous rain seemed like an attack on his will. So I asked if he remembered any of his previous re-incarnations . . . and he told me thirty-three.

Subsequently, Krishnamurti repudiated the claim that he was the Messiah; dissolved the Order of the Star; and his father sued Mrs. Besant for damages. In turn, she withdrew her assertion that Jiddu was a Redeemer.

The Road to the West

The Theosophical Society was operating after World War I in some fifty countries, and Krishna Menon had plenty to

do besides his teaching duties. Also, he became active in the Boy Scout movement in Madras. A few years previously Lieutenant-General Baron R. S. S. Baden-Powell had launched the Boy Scout movement in Britain, and it had been an instant success. India was in even greater need of it than the western countries, Krishna Menon believed. In the summer of 1920 the first "International Jamboree" of the movement was held in London. It attracted world attention. Krishna Menon was engaged in many scouting activities—scoutmaster, scout commissioner, in charge of training camps. Was this one of the ways to reduce the appallingly high death rate among the young people of Madras?

Annie Besant helped Krishna Menon to go to England in 1924. He meant to stay six months, but he remained for a generation. Thus it was Mrs. Besant who became hand-maiden to Krishna Menon's destiny, for it was in London that he came to the attention of Jawaharlal Nehru, the man who was to become "Mr. India."

When Annie Besant and India collided, she hurled the subcontinent into space. She began her career by being pre-occupied with the fate of hundreds of millions, as the head of the Home Rule movement. But as the head of the Theosophical Society, she set out to save all mankind. She has been described as a genius and a charlatan. Certainly she dramatized the wisdom of India, which she sought to transmit to the West. More than any other Britisher of her time, she made the world aware of India's plight. On the other hand, her adversaries charged, she was one of the greatest headline-stealers since the invention of movable type. Did Krishna Menon, one wonders, become her disciple in that respect, too?

CHAPTER IV

In the Camp of the Foe

Meeting

HE HAD INTRODUCTIONS to several leading Labour Party members in London, also to some back-benchers, mainly people who took an interest in India. They were friendly people, who welcomed the eager young Indian.

"Handsome in a diabolical way," a British periodical was to write about him. "When he smiles—and it is an irresistible smile—he conjures up Mephistopheles gloating over a phosphorescent crystal ball. . . . His eyes have a fanatical gleam. . . . His eyebrows, his aquiline nose, and his hands are almost as voluble as his lips. . . ."

"His profile," it was noted elsewhere, "is a sculptor's dream, his restlessness his despair. . . . Hampered by a disability [he limps] he becomes hunched and round-shouldered when he walks. When his foot is not troubling him, he moves with quick, short steps, his walking stick dangling from his arm."

His expressive face still reflects his moods, suddenly changing: sunshine and storm, a scowl, a sneer and, then, unexpected

edly, a benign beam. A soft handshake, almost feminine, and quick reactions, intuitive. Volubility and extreme reticence, a strange combination. Yes, indeed, he is an uncommon mixture, an extrovert and an introvert. An actor, too. But in those days, in London, his audience was small.

He arrived in London, in 1924, a young man of twenty-seven. He had heard much about the country from his *guru*, Annie Besant—also from Shakespeare, and Burke, and Mill—and his curiosity to see the land which was both the birth-place of democracy and the oppressor of India was great.

He had got used to the tall, swaggering stalwarts in Calicut and Madras, the I.C.S. people, the supermen of the Indian Civil Service, self-assured, some of them arrogant, others helpful in a condescending way. There was always a wall in India between the ruler and the ruled, the men carrying the white man's burden and the lesser breeds. But here in London there was no wall.

He had turned his back on the maternal house (his mother was dead, anyway). Also, he seems to have lost contact with his relatives. And so he stayed in London. Why? Secretive now, as he must have been then, he furnishes no acceptable clue. His friends say that he spoke so openly against the British regime in India as to close the gates of his native land in his face. That is nonsense, of course. He was as yet a human cipher, and what difference did it make what he said? The things he said, he said to Englishmen in the capital of the British Empire, and London was a privileged sanctuary for such complaints. And what if he was to be consigned to jail after his return to India? Nearly all the heroes of India's war of independence spent long stretches of time in prison. Serving jail sentences later turned out to be almost a qualification for high government service.

Thus began his new reincarnation in London. The web of his life there had many strands, interlinked and looped, with occasional broken threads. It looks disorganized, and falls into a pattern only on close observation. It was not a Bohemian life, in the freedom of a new world without too many taboos, since Krishna Menon was an ascetic. Strong drinks were not for him, nor, for that matter, any drinks, except endless cups of tea, sometimes thirty a day, plus milk and his favorite tomato juice. Very little food, because he had very little money and also because he found he could live on next to nothing. He was a strict vegetarian, and has continued to be. Nor does he smoke.

As to women, here again the curtain is drawn. He was the type of young man who might attract young women of the intellectual type, in search of the exciting "mysteries" of the Orient, attracted by exotic charm, that warm smile lighting up his face, his volubility, his complicated inner structure (or was it really that complicated?) the extroverted introvert, aggressive and shy. Was there a young woman in his life?

There are rumors about an English girl whom he encountered in the mid-thirties. What happened then? There is that impenetrable curtain again. He has remained a bachelor.

The Indian Faust

There is something Faustian about his early years in London, his appetite constantly sharpened by the appetizers of knowledge—political science, philosophy, psychology, some economics and, above all, history, and, of course, law. Krishna Menon continued to respect that remarkable aged woman at Adyar, Annie Besant, still very young in spirit and full of adventure. But he had had enough of the presumed mysteries

of the Orient, and did not want much more of theosophy. He wanted to be introduced to the clarities of western life. What made the West tick? Why did people live so much longer there? Why did they have the capacity to smile and laugh? He was now at the very fountainhead of knowledge.

To learn, yes, but also to teach, to disseminate knowledge about India. He was attempting to do that all the time, but it was only his sideline at the beginning of his London life.

He wanted to engage in his studies in the western way, the organized way; to study not only for learning's sake, but also for its practical use. But did he actually know what he wanted? Should it be the law? The idea attracted him. He visualized himself in the forensic setting, analyzing complex cases, drawing upon the spontaneous brilliance of his insights, his eloquence sweeping the jury off its feet. Yes, the study of law did appeal to him. "Law," he still says, "is the application of common sense to litigious cases." He was quite sure he had common sense, and the gift for dissecting problems and presenting his findings to others. Yes, law was very much in Krishna Menon's mind. Eventually, he qualified as a barrister.

And so was teaching, almost for the same reasons. He was thinking of history as his specialty—the history of men's thoughts as well as of their actions. He liked to compare the real with the potential, the peoples' pressures, the leaders' motives, the great emotional upsurges of the masses, the interplay of contradictory forces, the innate drive of people to oppress others and the opposite drive to free themselves. He believed in the Hegelian dialectic: the operation of historical forces, beginning with a series of statements, a series of facts, swinging to antistatements, a cluster of opposite facts, coming to rest at a new balance of synthesis. Out of this Hegelian dialectic was born his absorption in Marxist dialectical materi-

alism: the importance of the interplay of economic forces—bread, loot, capital accumulation—and the class struggle. Yes, he would have liked to engage in the teaching of history. He also obtained a teacher's diploma.

Politics appealed to him, too, but that road was crowded with priority-minded people, natives of the land who had English for their native tongue. First, he must get acclimated in London and, above all else, immerse himself in his studies. In London there were no forbidden books, and he entered the public libraries with awe. He wanted to remain a student all his life, even as a teacher.

The Year of Miracles

"The war to end all wars," America's President Woodrow Wilson had called World War I. It had been a traumatic experience for Britain, presumably shielded from rude outside contacts by its moat. In the charnel house of the battlefields of France, the best of Britain's sons had been ground into the mud.

During the war Krishna Menon had been a student at the Law College, Madras, where he had gained his B.A. degree. When asked about his war service some years later at the London School of Economics, he answered: "India Defence Force, 1917." What, if anything, this meant is unclear. Probably it was merely a fanciful bit of self-dramatization.

The United States now occupied Britain's former place as the main creditor nation, and the government in Washington insisted that London repay the funds it had obtained for the conduct of the war to "make the world safe for democracy." Meanwhile, vast funds had been transferred from London's Lombard Street to New York's Wall Street. Amer-

ica was now the center of the capitalist world, and, indeed, the United States was the incarnation of capitalism.

The Socialist friends of Krishna Menon in London de-tested the United States. At home the young Indian had paid scant attention to America, a country shrouded in the clouds of distance. Now, however, he heard much about the overseas republic. And most of what he heard about it was highly critical. Was this the beginning of his attitude toward the United States?

Nineteen twenty-four, when Krishna Menon arrived in London, was the *annus mirabilis*, the wonderful year. It was the year in which the lion and the lamb were lying down together, living in fond amity, the expected Year One of perpetual peace. Britain had now a government that was headed by a former Scottish miner, an illegitimate son—Ramsay MacDonald. This time Labour got a larger number of seats in the House of Commons than the Liberal Party. It received the support of the Liberals against the Conservatives, who now moved across the Commons aisle to the side of His Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition. Peace, indeed, was to dawn on the world. It was this same Labour Party which a few years later was to vow at one of its annual conferences never to take a part in any future war and, if necessary, to declare a general strike to prevent Britain from entering such a war.

Still more miraculously, the two presumed hereditary foes, Germany and France, were now in each other's embrace. Dreams were to come true in a few months more, when the two nations' spokesmen negotiated a basic pact about their borders, which were to endure forever, thereby insuring eternal peace.

The Labour Party and Krishna Menon

Many Conservatives considered Labour "left wing." Not all of it was, and, indeed, it has never been a monolithic organization. It had its right and left wings, as well as its center. The right wing approached the ideal of the Christian Socialists, with their program of aid to the lower classes so as to improve their standards, abolition of the great inequalities of wealth through steeply progressive taxation, and creation of the conditions for a peaceful world.

The left wing agreed with all this, but it went far beyond. One of its spokesmen, John Strachey, held that the great advantage of socialism over all other political systems was its ability to think and act in social terms, rather than in the interest of privileged individuals and classes. Socialism meant to them the type of economy in which the entire country, acting through its government, was engaged in a measure of planning for the public benefit. These Socialists asserted that capitalism, too, was engaged in planning, for private profit through monopolistic schemes. This wing of the Labour Party favored the public ownership of the key industries engaged in the production of those goods which the entire economy needed. It also favored a much broader extension of social services, especially in the field of public health. Also, the left-wing Socialists of Britain were cordial to the idea of friendly relations with Soviet Russia. These Labour members held that the time had come for Britain to confer more extensive civil rights on the people of India.

Krishna Menon felt closest to the Labour "Young Turks," the rebellious spirits of the left wing. But he became acquainted also with the stolid and solid bureaucratic Labour grandees, as for instance Clement Attlee (who was to be-

come the Prime Minister of Britain) and Ernest Bevin (the future Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) in a way that was to thoroughly transform the life of India and of Krishna Menon.

Enter Professor Laski

No Englishman—or scholar—ever made a greater impression on Krishna Menon than did Harold J. Laski. “He was one of the greatest men of the twentieth century,” Krishna Menon told me, and he is not a man to hand out bouquets. Laski, already one of the most controversial political scientists of the English-speaking world, had lectured at Amherst, Harvard and Yale, and at that time was lecturer in political science at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and a member of the faculty of the London School of Economics and Political Science. In great demand in many parts of the world, Laski also lectured at Trinity College, Dublin, and at the Institute of Soviet Law, in Moscow. At the time of Krishna Menon’s arrival in London, Laski was a member of the executive committee of the Fabian Society, the home of intellectual Socialists. Later, he also became a member of the Labour Party executive committee, and held numerous posts in the government. His name had been established by his authorship of such seminal books as *Political Thought in England from Locke to Bentham* (which was in the field of Krishna Menon’s special interest) and *Karl Marx*. Later, he was to write basic books about the United States: *The American Presidency* and *The American Democracy*. Although the difference in their ages was not great, Laski was to become the young Krishna Menon’s *guru*.

Years later, in 1954, Krishna Menon was instrumental in the establishment of a “Harold Laski Institute of Political Sci-

ence" in Ahmedabad. In his message to the inauguration of the Institute, he recalled that he had been Laski's pupil for ten years, most of it not in classrooms and seminars, but in discussions and conversations. Then he added: "Professor Laski's life has been the moral foundation on which many of those who really knew him and loved him have set out to build the essential structure of their thinking and social values."

Outstanding in the group of Labour scholars with whom Krishna Menon became acquainted was Sidney Webb. Webb and his wife Beatrice formed a remarkable writing team. Another Labour party leader with whom Krishna Menon became acquainted early in his career was Sir Stafford Cripps, who was to play a great role in the history of India. The son of Lord Parmoor and the nephew of Beatrice Webb, Sir Stafford was a man of great intellect and unusual achievements, a chemist as well as a highly successful corporation lawyer. He was an extreme left-winger, who, at one time, was read out of the Labour Party because of his deep commitment to a united front with the Communists. He was not only reinvited subsequently, but was also called upon to play historic roles in Britain's World War II cabinet. Krishna Menon was particularly close to him.

And then there was the well-known Socialist editor and writer H. N. Brailsford, as explosive in his likes as in his dislikes, and deeply involved in attempted solutions to India's problems. Also, Bertrand Russell (later Earl Russell), far-famed mathematician, philosopher, Nobel Prize-winner, and "aggressive pacifist," was another early contact of Krishna Menon's, a contact which continued through the years. And there were many more Labour Party leaders and members of Parliament, some of whom were to play important parts

in The India League, which later became Krishna Menon's corporate embodiment.

The Age of Gandhiji

In the course of time, Krishna Menon came to be in great demand in Labour parliamentary circles because of his zest in presenting India's cause. He became also the mouthpiece of the Congress Party, and especially of the ideals expressed by a shrunken little man, Mahatma Gandhi, whom his admirers called Gandhiji.

"The Age of Gandhi" began at the Congress Party's special session at Calcutta in 1920, and it lasted until his death (with a gap in the twenties when he kept in the background). Gandhi was working for India's increased participation in her own government, and eventual self-rule, in a new way. He did not call on the Indians to rise against the British and sweep them out of the land. On the contrary, he advocated peace. Force, he said, begets force and solved no problems. If an attempt was made to employ physical force, might not emotional people, many of them famished and illiterate, get out of hand? India's noblest tradition, he declared, was *satyagraha*, the force of the soul, the steadfast grasping of truth, and this became the pivot of his creed. His philosophy was contained in one short sentence of the *Upanishads*, the Hindu classic: "Truth always wins." Non-violence, *ahimsa*, was the practical application of this philosophy.

Krishna Menon had Gandhi's writings at his fingertips, and he quoted them freely to his English friends:

Strength does not arise from physical capacity. It springs from indomitable will. . . . Non-violence is as much the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies

dormant in the brute and the only law he knows is physical might. Man's dignity commands obeisance to a higher law—the strength of the spirit. . . . I am not pleading for non-violence because India is weak. Being conscious of her power I want her to practise non-violence. . . .

One of his disciples said that Gandhi had the capacity to turn clay into heroes. Also, he had an uncanny way of ascertaining what people wanted, and then dramatizing their wishes in such a way that the world had to take notice. Indians considered him a holy man, and they flocked to see him in countless numbers. Eventually it became physically impossible for him to address such vast masses, but then people had their fill by just looking at him. They went on their way contented because they had seen him.

Although Krishna Menon became a spokesman of the Congress Party in his circle of English friends, he was not in agreement with all of Gandhiji's policies. Gandhi was traveling in the middle of the road, Krishna Menon far to the left. "The poor will be always with us," Gandhi seemed to say. With that view in mind, he collected money for the Lord of the Poor, *daridnarayan*, to help the poverty-stricken wretches through charity. Because he considered the poor the special favorites of the gods, Gandhi virtually encouraged people to remain in their status. Indeed, he glorified poverty. With this stand Krishna Menon could not agree.

Gandhi also advocated national self-sufficiency, and especially a return to the simple ancestral crafts—handlooms producing *khadi*, cotton cloth. Krishna Menon believed, on the other hand, that industrialization was the answer, along with modernization of all the other productive processes of India.

Differences in Views

The Labour government was at the helm only for a few months. It was defeated at the autumn elections and returned to power again only five years later. Krishna Menon observed that Labour Party parliamentary members were readier to heed his words when they were out of power than when they were at the helm. Of course, the Socialists were in a minority in their first government, and had to consider the strong views of more conservative Englishmen on India. The belief was unshakable that India was the pivot of the British Empire, and that were she to go the entire imperial structure would collapse.

There was another point on which young Indians in Britain, including Krishna Menon and many Labour parliamentary members, could not agree. To these latter the Soviet Union was the abomination of abominations, the betrayer of the proletarian cause, the enemy of democracy, and no better than the extreme right.

The enemy of the Indians was imperialism, with which they had first-hand acquaintance. They had never been in the Soviet Union, and had no clear picture of its way of life. They *were* familiar with its professed beliefs. Heading the list of these was the Soviets' opposition to imperialism—and this was in the center of the Indians' interest.

Also, India was wretchedly poor, Britain rich. Was Britain the oppressor in India because of the call of gold? The Soviets denounced money as the great seducer. Again the expatriate Indians sympathized with the Soviet view. Further, while many people were soon to look at the Kremlin as the powerhouse of expansionism, Indians saw in it the exponent of ideas they liked. Were they Communists themselves? Was

Krishna Menon a Communist? He was not publishing his tracts as yet, but when he started doing so they read much like Communist propaganda. Occasionally, he advocated causes which stood close to Communist hearts. But he was not then a Communist himself, nor did he ever become one. Not only appearing but sometimes also sounding like Mephistopheles, he was a perennial "sayer of nay." He liked to see white where most other people saw black. To submit to Communist Party discipline would have contradicted his innermost nature as a nay-sayer, an incarnation of the nonconformist.

At the Marble Arch

One of the great British national institutions is the soapbox—the decrepit soapbox which people of all political persuasions lug to the Marble Arch in Hyde Park. They set down the soapbox—and do it to this very day—and start exercising their prerogative as free citizens of a great country. Royalty is, to England, more than a collection of people; it is a hallowed national institution, a historic symbol, the embodiment of ancient tradition. On any day, at Marble Arch, a speaker can stand up on his soapbox and demand that the Queen of England be ousted. The police are there, watching the proceedings and seeing to it that the man has his say without rude interruption.

Krishna Menon was thoroughly impregnated with the idea that Britain had done injustice to *Bharat*—his land of India—exploiting the people, battenning on their miserable livelihoods, preventing the free expression of just opinions and clapping the best of them in jail. He resented injustice, and the injustice perpetrated on his people was, he felt, an insult not only to them but to all mankind. His thoughts clustered

around India. A conversation with a neighbor might begin on any subject, but it was bound to end with *Bharat*. "The sun is lovely," the neighbor would remark, and Krishna Menon would answer, "Yes, but British rule in India is atrocious."

He was bursting with zeal to let the world know how he felt about this. And so off he marched to the Marble Arch.

Audiences stimulated him, and the larger the audience the greater the stimulation. Repartee quick as the fencer's rapier was his forte, but his humor usually shaded into heavy sarcasm. These impromptu speeches helped him to polish his oratorical technique, and he would return home, with his soapbox, filled with a glow of satisfaction as he recalled the thrusts he had scored.

Curious people, these English, he reflected. Here he was, in the lion's cage, twisting the tail of the Lord of the Jungle to his heart's content. The audience was pleased, mostly, flashing him encouraging smiles, and the lion was meek. A brave young Indian he was, deserving of accolade. England was the lion's own realm. What would have happened to lion-tail-twister Krishna Menon in India? He could not have twisted the lion's tail there. Off he would have been marched to jail. And that was the paradox: safe in the lion's cage, but not outside it. The British were, indeed, a strange breed of men—so understanding at home and so autocratic abroad.

In Camden Town

Thus he remained in England, a student at first and a part-time teacher. He kept on living frugally, almost like those Indian ascetics who were able to live on air for days on end. Yet he was not poor, because he was free to say and do the things he wanted to. He was not poor even from the financial

point of view, although he had little enough money. Poverty was mainly a state of mind, he found, except when it became a reality in countries like India.

Where did he live? First in Bloomsbury, just beyond University College, in a boarding-house district filled with students' "digs." Thirty shillings was about the maximum he spent a week for rent, and a private bathroom was a luxury beyond his reach. Later he had a room in Hampstead, not a bad neighborhood, and in Highgate, to the north. Most of the time he lived in one part or another of the St. Pancras municipal borough, mostly in its center, Camden Town, as typical a working-class district as he could find. And the rooms there were cheaper, too.

His flats in Camden Town were rickety places, the sooty paint peeling from the walls, and the staircase a disgrace. Even his bare lightbulb seemed to be almost a luxury in that naked setting. He filled his iron stove with all the inflammable junk he could lay his hands on, sitting close to it swathed in clothes even during the height of the summer season, recreating the climate of the Malabar Coast. And there was always that battered teapot, which must have been one of the most overworked utensils in London Town.

Camden Town's inhabitants were mostly workers in the nearby railway yards and furniture and piano-making plants, or were the usual "service" people, delivering the mail and milk, driving the trucks. Many of them were narrow-chested, insignificant-looking people, shuffling off to work in the morning, shuffling back in the evening, sallow-faced and weary. A dispirited bunch of people they looked, and not at all the *Uebermenschen* of his younger days on the Malabar Coast.

Camden Town is crisscrossed by a network of rails, ending

in three terminals. Long before the break of dawn, the bulging suburban trains are swishing into town, and what a noise they make! Although London is a monstrously bloated megapolopolis, Krishna Menon would never have suspected that so many people lived in its northern suburbs, disembarking at the nearby King's Cross Station. And what a flood of people streamed into town from the northeast, arriving at the Midland Railway's massive St. Pancras Station. The Euston Station was the outlet for bringing the northwestern suburbanites into town. The residents of Camden Town could listen to the wailing whistle of the fast trains, shaking the very crust of the earth in their swift advance; and the nocturnal operations of the railway yards provided a shattering counterpoint. Eventually he got used to these sounds, too. What right did he have to complain about a fate which he shared with so many others? This type of life became his own.

He stayed longest at 57, Camden Square—for the entire duration of World War II and some years before and after—approximately ten years. The square is pleasant enough and the small flower-garden behind the house is attractive, but both the square and the house had seen better days. The environment is prominently multiracial today.

Krishna Menon had a room and the use of the bath. His furnished room had a bed, a table, a couple of chairs, a wardrobe and a sideboard. Come hell or high water, he had to have his morning bath, and hell often broke loose when the *Luftwaffe* set out to put the torch to London. Krishna Menon's landlady is still puzzled about this. Did he, she wonders, insist on his morning bath because of his religion? He paid a pound per week for rent, including the price of his breakfast—tea and toast. The rent was modest even for Camden Town.

Krishna Menon used his room only for sleeping. He never gave any parties nor did he entertain guests. In the evening he returned at irregular hours, and if it was not late, he asked Mrs. Rouse for tea. While Krishna Menon was meticulous about his clothing, he left his room in Bohemian disarray. It is with some amusement that Mrs. Rouse recalls that his discarded clothing was scattered all over the room and that he seemed to be unable to fold his towels "neat-like."

He never talked about India or his court cases. Sipping his tea in the ground-floor apartment he would make the expected comments about the weather. It was not part of his plan to convert his landlady and her son, a tool designer, living in the same house, to his creed of freedom for India.

The landlady's son summed up his and his mother's reaction to Krishna Menon in a simple comment with which it is difficult to take exception: "He's not matey."

CHAPTER V

The Peregrinating Scholar

The "Chela" and the "Guru"

STUDENT, SCHOLAR, TEACHER, BARRISTER, he continued his studies until he was thirty-seven. He managed to remain penniless most of the time, because of his haughty disdain for the "profit motive." To this day he seems to be proud of the fact that he never carries money in his pocket. Still, he had to pay the weekly twenty shillings for his rent, keep his overworked teapot boiling, buy in the market the little food he needed, and pay for his "flannel bags." Proudly he tells the inquirer even today that he got his bachelor's and master's degrees with first-class honors. But we have to line up the periods of his life in proper order.

His connection with the Fabian Society paved the way for his scholastic career. The Fabian Socialists believe in gradualism—that history's innate forces take their own good time. No revolutions—evolution—and the "inevitability of gradualism." Many of the immortals of British letters came to believe in the Fabian creed, and Krishna Menon came to know them

all. He seems to have won them over with his arguments about the "inevitability of gradualism" as applied to India. That is how he established his contacts with George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Harold Laski, the Webbs, and many others. Yet the Fabian creed was too tame for Krishna Menon. Just the same, he cherished the connections he made there, and above all cherished his contact with Harold Laski. He claims that Laski was his principal *guru*, and that he was Laski's *chela*, disciple. According to Krishna Menon, Laski is supposed to have said: "Yes, I taught Krishna Menon, but it was not always he who was at the receiving end."

And this leads us to the London School of Economics.

The London School of Economics

It all began with Sidney Webb—that pudgy little man with the enormous forehead and the quizzical look in half-smiling eyes—at the time when Krishna Menon was still a resident of the Malabar Coast. A former member of the Fabian Society, Henry Hunt Hutchinson, left an estate of £10,000—a large amount in those days—to be spent on any cause, at the discretion of Sidney Webb.

A Fabian Socialist, Webb agreed with orthodox Marxists that economics formed the framework of many of the thoughts and deeds of man in his social environment. He also agreed that economics as an academic subject was badly neglected, considered a "dismal science" since the doleful days of Rev. Thomas Malthus, who had said some dire things about the hopeless race between the food supply and the rapidly increasing race of man.

Webb believed that thoughtful people should know more about economics and political science. Therefore he deemed

it a good idea to invest the money left by Mr. Hutchinson in a school specializing in these subjects. This was the beginning of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The school was designed to be close to Labour, and to laboring men who lacked the funds to study at Oxford and Cambridge. People working during the day would find its gates open to them at night. Research workers were welcome—eager amateurs with the perceptions and willingness to work on intellectual hobbies. Women were also welcome.

It was at the turn of the century that the London School of Economics was incorporated. It filled a gap and, therefore, was a success. Then came World War I, which delayed its growth. But it had a great spurt after the war, helped along by the success of the Labour Party. Cabinet members, M.P.'s and other "big names" considered it an honor to lecture there. Because of his connection with Labour people and his own inclinations, it was natural that Krishna Menon should be attracted to the London School of Economics, which was by then incorporated in the University of London.

The scholarships and bursaries of the school stood impecunious young people from India and elsewhere in good stead. The school was sufficiently broadminded to offer a public forum of great respectability for the airing of a variety of political views. The chairman of the governors was Sidney Webb himself, and the staff of the school was excellent, some of them of East Indian and European birth. The brightest star in its academic firmament was Harold Laski.

The Center of the World

Krishna Menon's life centered around the school, which, in turn, was located in the "heartland" of the artistic and intellectual life of the capital. What a concentration of treasures the man from the Malabar Coast found within that magic circle, with its radius of slightly over a mile. The British Museum was within walking distance—and Krishna Menon could not afford too many underground fares—and how right was the noted art critic John Ruskin when he said that the museum contained the "grandest concentration of human knowledge in the world." The Victoria Embankment was no more than a step away, and Krishna Menon loved to stroll there. The Houses of Parliament were nearby, and it was easy to get a "member's order" to the strangers' gallery.

Promenading along Whitehall, he reflected on the innate strength of the governmental organization which was strong enough to control a global empire. He liked to walk to St. James's Park, with its India House, sedate and serene, on the dust-covered desks of which was decided the fate of hundreds of millions of people. At South Kensington, a longer walk, he found a branch of the Victoria and Albert Museum—the India Museum, erstwhile property of the defunct East India Company, containing a matchless collection of India's ancient and modern arts and crafts, confirming his belief in the power of regeneration of the people of the subcontinent.

Harold Laski and India

A stunted little man spoke in his high-pitched voice, and an empire took heed. Gandhiji was a master of public rela-

tions, for India and for himself. He proved that stronger than the mightiest firearm is the human spirit. He aroused not only the intellectuals, but also the masses of the people. Gandhi called for non-violent non-cooperation against the British, the boycott of British merchandise and non-payment of taxes. Endless bouts of *hartals* (strikes and sabotage) affected Britain's money-nerves. Japanese goods penetrated into the economic blood stream of India. Britain found that lofty disdain was no longer in place. An Indian statutory commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon, one of the last great Liberals, was laboring to pierce the fog surrounding the problems of India.

Ramsay MacDonald was again at the helm in 1929, the leader of Labour. Two years later he headed a coalition government which was to last until 1935. Was The India League of Krishna Menon—about which more later—instrumental in pricking Labour's conscience in regard to the Indian imbroglio? Labour did have an uneasy feeling about India, but the time was not yet ripe for drastic action. It was, however, ripe for a more serious study of the problem than it had received heretofore. And Krishna Menon's *guru*, the "brain-truster" of the Labour Party, Harold Laski, had a hand in that investigation.

The Indian conference, in which Harold Laski was involved, took place in 1931. The former Lord Chancellor of England, Viscount Sankey, was the chairman of this Indian conference, and Laski worked with him. We can follow the details of this work in the highly interesting correspondence between Laski and Oliver Wendell Holmes already mentioned. This section of the correspondence began when Laski wrote to Holmes, on September 17, 1931, "Half the time I

am a kind of *éminence grise* for Sankey at the Indian conference."

Laski's letters enable one to look into some of the Indian problems. It was the Indian princes who created the greatest difficulties, he wrote his great American friend. They were *prima donnas*, difficult to handle. Krishna Menon said of them that many of them were detestable creatures.

"They are ill-educated, tyrannical"—Laski wrote—"with no conception of negotiation. . . . They take you straight back to the East India Company and make you feel that discussion with the likes o' them is folly and that one ought to act like Warren Hastings with them." (His reference was to the eighteenth-century governor-general of India, who had sought to break the princes' hold.)

The "communal problem" was another affliction about which Laski wrote. This was the chronic feud between the Hindu majority and the Moslem minority, beholden as they were, and are, to different sets of values proceeding from different historical paths of development, sharing contrary aspirations, dreaming different dreams.

Laski dwelt upon the Moslem spokesmen's role at the conference table: "Their religious fanaticism is terrible."

Sankey tried to urge him to talk to the Moslems, and Laski wrote to Holmes in another letter: "I had their leader here for hours, trying to find a basis for discussion. But it was like talking to a wall."

This Moslem saw his own religion as the ultimate and only truth, and even when talking about secular matters he never relinquished the field of theology.

A Maharajah was Laski's dinner-table neighbor on one occasion, and "a more banal idiot I have never met. For no other reason than drawing attention to himself and giving

orders he had windows opened and closed." Laski was then bidden to dine with another prince, who made nine speeches in the course of one evening. "I enjoyed the first five because one never knew what he was going to say next."

The Sankey committee had a limited task—to prepare, if possible, a bill providing for the federation of the Indian states and provinces. Further, it was to pave the way for provincial autonomy. Participating at the conference was Mahatma Gandhi.

"The drama of this wizened little man with the whole power of the empire against him is a terrific spectacle," Laski wrote. "The basis of it all is, I think, the power of an ascetic over eastern minds who resent the feeling of inferiority they have had for 150 years. And to watch his people hang on to his words, he who has neither eloquence nor the gift of verbal artistry, is fascinating. . . . But at least I understand now why Christianity in the first century appealed to the poor and the oppressed. Through Gandhi the *ryot* [peasant] feels himself exalted; he embodies for them their own impulse of self-affirmation."

"Gandhi is really remarkable," Laski wrote in another letter, "and there is no difficulty in understanding the veneration he inspires. He is quiet, precise, subtle and there is an inner dignity about him, which is of supreme quality."

Laski found it fascinating to watch Gandhi at work, and he tried to penetrate into his secret—the spell he cast over his audience.

"It comes, I think, from what the Quakers call the inner light—a power of internal self-confidence which, having established its principles, is completely impervious to reason."

The Indian students who surrounded Laski found the supreme image of Indian aspiration in Gandhi. They formed

a *majlis*, or assembly, as they called it, in the London School of Economics and other parts of the University of London. Gandhi's value to their cause was inestimable. Here was a saint, the opposite of the ideal of western materialism, the oriental Parsifal, pure in spirit, cleansed of the dross of everyday life.

He was simple in his habits—simple as the food he ate. Not for him the aspiration to rise above his people in the amenities of life; the lowest-class train coach was his usual means of transportation. Members of the *majlis* in London, however, neglected to tell their English friends that the saintly Gandhi's simple food cost his party friends a fortune because it had to be of a special quality and was extraordinarily difficult to obtain, and that they had to buy up all the tickets of a railway coach for his travels so as to keep him from contamination from those unwashed masses whose supreme teacher he was. It cost the National Congress Party vast sums to keep Gandhi in the style of poverty to which he had become accustomed.

Some of the *majlis* members also knew that the Gandhian simplicity was contrived, and that he was a consummate actor, one of the greatest the century has seen. But he did have deep empathy with his people, was the perfect sounding board for their aspirations. Had he been a real "saint," with no personal aspirations and deficient in histrionic ability, he might have been one of the nameless millions to die of starvation in countless unnamed villages.

The countless conflicts between the Hindus and Moslems, the princes and the British administration, could not be reconciled, and the conference was a flop. In those days many Englishmen, even of the most liberal persuasion, were convinced that should India whirl out of the imperial orbit the

United Kingdom would be reduced to the status of a third-rate nation, unable to sustain its population on the "tight little island" and forced to inaugurate a large-scale movement of emigration overseas.

And what of the influence which Krishna Menon hints that he exerted on Laski? The Laski-Holmes correspondence is printed in two large volumes of more than 1,600 pages. Most of the names mentioned are those of people whom Laski met, since Holmes, very aged, wrote fewer letters. The index for both men contains some 380 names. Krishna Menon's name is not mentioned once in the entire correspondence. This may be due to the fact that he was merely one of several people from India in Laski's entourage, not much different from the others. But it is difficult to escape the impression that Krishna Menon may have provided no special fare for Laski's thoughts in connection with the Sankey conference.

The Appetite Increases with Eating

In the meantime, the lanky Indian with the greedy eyes kept on studying. His voracious reading was eclectic. In India, his passionate interest had been aroused by the annals of the subcontinent. Now his main interest shifted to the history of the United Kingdom. He read about it not only as an exercise *à la recherche du temps perdu*, but also as the tentative solution of an enigma. How could an isolated people, parochial in its views, create a global empire? What were the secret ingredients of the British mind? And what was the explanation of that other anomaly—democracy at home and autocracy abroad?

He re-read his favorite authors with the penetration which a better knowledge of their intellectual climate had stimu-

lated. He thought that Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontent* was so modern in its views that it could have been a product of the contemporary world. Except that the reference should now be to India, not Britain. The policies of the Tory government had been oppressive to a public opinion in England which was bursting with the belief that even the unlettered person could know what he wanted. The English had reacted to the Tory policies successfully. What about modern India?

John Stuart Mill continued to be Krishna Menon's favorite author. Krishna Menon became absorbed in the narrative of Mill's Indian career—first a junior clerk, then in charge of relations with the native states (an important post), and, finally, chief of office. He relished also Mill's *Representative Government* and *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*.

Krishna Menon's highlighted reading list of those days indicates his specialized interests. One of his great favorites was the *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, by William Edward Lecky. The same author's *Democracy and Liberty* and *The Map of Life* impressed him as the classical expositions of the progressive faith. He liked the *Histoire du Peuple Anglais au XIXe Siècle*, by Elie Halévy, which he was to publish in English in another of his reincarnations.

The uncommonly prolific Trevelyan family left a great impression on him. So many great men working in closely related fields: Charles, Walter, George, then "the second Charles" of the Grand Dynasty, and finally George Macaulay Trevelyan. He was fascinated to see how many of Britain's great historians had dealt with India's special problems. For instance, there was Sir Charles Edward, of the Dynasty, striking hard on the main problem of the subcontinent in his seminal book *On the Education of the People of India*. This

particular Trevelyan had also known Krishna Menon's own Malabar Coast. The Indian *chela*, reading in his Bloomsbury student "digs," was fascinated by the offbeat book of Sir George Otto Trevelyan, *Cawnpore*. Among the latter-day members of the Dynasty, Krishna Menon appreciated George Macaulay Trevelyan's *British History in the Nineteenth Century*, a subject particularly close to his heart.

The young Indians of those days were fascinated by the "Soviet experiment." Western newspapers were filled with criticisms of this new Russia, to be sure, but the Indian students at the London School of Economics were contemptuous of their strictures. What else could these western newspapers say? The emergence of the Soviet state had placed capitalism on trial. The more the Soviet Union was attacked, the less the young Indians believed the papers. The West had oversold its case, and the East no longer trusted its criticisms.

Marx and Engels were "classics" by now, their volumes in the British Museum thumbed to shreds. There was also Lenin, especially his *Imperialism as the Last Stage of Capitalism*, the very title of which sounded like a trumpet call. And there was that errant genius Leon Trotsky, and Karl Kautsky—concerning whose prevarications the Indians were of different minds—and, above all, that grand old German Social Democratic party leader and author, August Bebel, whose book *The Woman and Socialism* was hailed as a masterpiece.

Krishna Menon was well into his thirties when he gained his master's degree with first class honors at the London School of Economics (he never received a Ph.D.). Now he could add "M.Sc." to his academic titles. And there was his thesis, with its impressive title: "An Experimental Study of the Mental Processes Involved in Reasoning." What did his subject reveal?

It revealed his growing awareness of the shortcomings of the intuitive processes, an awareness which had been long in vogue, in the explanations of the French-Italian sociologist-economist Vilfredo Pareto and especially those of Henri Bergson. It dwelt on the fact that cognition is the uniquely human trait, operating within vastly broad borders, the full extent of which have yet to be explored. It expatiated on the possibilities of an intellectual realm whose building blocks must resemble the atoms of the physical universe, and which must be ferreted out if the full scope of the potentialities of the mental operations is to be grasped. The scholarly Indian was ages away from the mystic world of Adyar on the Coromandel Coast, and theosophy.

"Gladly Would He Learn, and Gladly Teach"

Krishna Menon was also engaged in a modest measure of teaching while studying. He did this in a setting which impels the chronicler to pay a brief visit to the English countryside.

"When Dante placed the gateway to Inferno in Italy he displayed a lack of imagination. He should have placed it in the Midlands of England."

Having begun the industrial revolution, England turned a part of the verdant countryside into a wasteland. The incentive was production, and the price paid for it in the destruction of natural beauty was deemed of no account. As long as the factories paid, the countryside did not count. Yet what more enchanting rural scenes can one find than the rainsoaked beauty of the English landscape, where it has escaped industrial corrosion? What could be more entrancing than meandering along byways lined with hills, or keeping to the rural road as it climbs the slope to the nearest hill and then

dips into the grassy vale on the other side? Was it possible to reconcile the interests of industrialization with the values of esthetics and the people's health? Krishna Menon was projected briefly into the midst of such an experiment.

It had been launched by a "dreamer of dreams . . . the idle singer of an empty day," as he called himself: William Morris, poet, practicing artist, lover of the arts, dreamer—a man of genius. He had a dream, and it was a strange one. It told him that the free gifts of nature belonged to all people, not merely to private interests, and that these gifts could be reconciled with the interests of a producing community. Morris saw no sense in having eyesores mated with eyesores in the ravaged countryside. He believed that a serious effort should be made to combine the useful with the beautiful, that factories should be installed in the midst of meadows or woods, and that they should be flanked by workers' cottages surrounded by flower banks. He wanted the ruthless megapolis de-urbanized and garden towns built.

William Morris was one of the founders of socialism in Britain, and his idea was embraced by the Labour Party. Its interest was not propelled merely by a reawakened esthetic sense, but also by a measure of politics. What the Tories had destroyed, Labour would reconstruct. While, for technical reasons, the first "garden city" was not established in the English Midlands, eventually its scorched earth was also to be redeemed. The first flower-framed industrial city was to rise a few miles north of London, within commuting distance, at Letchworth.

The dream of Morris was translated into action by an erstwhile clerk in a stockbroker's office, London-born Ebenezer Howard, the official stenographer of the Chicago law courts,

later official reporter to the Houses of Parliament, and author of *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.

The "ideal town," Letchworth, was protected by a "green belt" of some three thousand acres. The industrial plants themselves were so spaced as not to encroach upon the people's rights to light and life. The individual cottages were placed in garden settings. The rent charged by the municipality also included the cost of the social services which this ideal community was to provide. At the same time, the increase in the value of the land resulting from the expected rise in population density was to be distributed among the householders as "unearned increment."

It was through his theosophist contacts that Krishna Menon became a student-teacher at St. Christopher School, Letchworth, for a full academic year shortly after his arrival in London. St. Christopher is recognized as a leading progressive co-educational private school. Principal Emeritus H. Lyn Harris describes Krishna Menon as a "brilliant teacher" and "good historian," who has maintained amicable relations with the noted Letchworth school to this day.

There was an epilogue to the dreamer's dream of garden towns replacing the eyesores. Still another attempt was made to establish such a community—at Welwyn, a score of miles from London. It proved abortive. Town developments could not always be forced into the straitjackets of ideologies. But whatever he may have inferred from Welwyn, Krishna Menon is fond of recalling his Letchworth experience.

A Remote Observer

Meanwhile he noticed the growing ambivalence of British attitudes toward India. He was struck particularly by the

contrast between Lord Reading and Lord Birkenhead.

Lord Reading was for a time the viceroy and governor-general of India, and a more progressive-minded, humanitarian and highly respected man it would have been hard to find. The former Rufus Daniel Isaacs, ex-solicitor general, ex-attorney-general and ex-lord chief justice of England was all that a creative statesman should be. Why was it, then, that conditions were getting worse in India? Why was it that a six-year jail term had been imposed upon Mahatma Gandhi, whose name was now a legend?

Krishna Menon compared Lord Reading with the man whose offices he often saw in St. James's Park—the office of the secretary of state for India. The incumbent of that office was Lord Birkenhead, the arch-Tory, about whom even his biographer had to say, "Humility is not one of his faults."

"His indrawn lower lips," Quincy Howe, the American historian and radio commentator, wrote, "accentuated the perpetual sneer in which his mouth had set, and he took the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race as much for granted as Hitler took the superiority of the Teutonic."

Why were conditions in India so intolerable, in spite of Lord Reading's decency? Because he, too, like everyone else, was entangled in the coils of a bad system—as Krishna Menon saw it, the enslavement of man by his fellow man. Lord Birkenhead did the dirty work while Lord Reading smiled.

Britain was not doing well economically, and so she decided to improve her condition at India's expense. She raised the value of the Indian rupee by 12½ per cent. This did not look like an earth-shaking event to the English, but it did shake the world which was India. Raising the cost of her currency, it also increased the prices of the goods of Indian

exports, pricing many of them out of the market. "The death warrant of millions of Indian farmers," the Congress Party called it. But it was a challenge to the Indians to disentangle themselves from the British coils.

Even though Lord Birkenhead was convinced that Britain's rule in India would endure, the honorable members on the benches occupied by His Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition found an issue about which to ask embarrassing questions. Why were Japanese textile sales in India increasing, British textile sales decreasing? Why were capital investments on the subcontinent stagnating? What about the non-violent non-cooperation campaign oriented toward *swaraj*—self-government—and how was it affecting British interests? What about tax collections? Sometimes, even what about the famine epidemics? Something was wrong with British rule in India. Something had been wrong, but now something had to be done about it.

There was ferment in the world which even Tories like Lord Birkenhead could not ignore. The Soviet Union had just announced the First Five-Year Plan—*Piatiletka*. Was it a propaganda gesture? What if it was not, and what if the Indians were to begin to take a serious interest in Soviet methods? Sir John Allsebrook Simon, junior counsel for the British government in the Alaska Boundary Arbitration, way back in 1903, former solicitor-general, attorney-general, and home secretary, received His Majesty's orders to head an Indian statutory commission. It had the proper frame of reference, and a generous time allotment.

The honorable members of the commission took their time in getting started, and reached India in the leisurely way of those days. They were given a reception at Bombay harbor.

Scrawled on the seawalls were the words "Simon, Go Home!"
The year was 1929.

Balak and Balaam

Meanwhile Krishna Menon continued to live in those quarters of London which the guidebooks usually describe as "shabby districts." He liked these shabby districts, and he felt at home among the English people, poor English working people, who did not look through him, nor look down on him because he was "different." He was one of them. He found the English tolerant, and "They are civilized people," he says. To this very day he has never ceased to repeat that characterization.

His circle of acquaintances was now much broader. Originally mainly Labour left-wingers, now they also included the established bureaucrats of that party, solid officials who were once again to become His Majesty's government in pursuance of the alternations in the standard electoral dialectic. He found interest for his cause even among the Tories, the very people who stood to occupy high position in India.

And thus it came to pass that the man from the Malabar Coast, who had expected to find enemies, or, at least neutrals, in hostile country, found many friends.

The Bible tells us about the Moabite Balak, who summoned the diviner Balaam to proceed into the land of his foes, Israel, and there utter a curse. And Balaam went on his mission, as directed by his royal master. But as he journeyed into the land of Israel, his ass reproved him for what he was about to do. The animal knew that its master's heart was not in his task. And when he reached his destination, Balaam, the Moabite prophet, uttered not a curse but a blessing. And so it was now

with Krishna Menon, formerly an Indian *chela* and now something of an Indian *guru*. He had gone to England to utter a curse, but he had found enough just men there to change his mind.

CHAPTER VI

The Song of India

The India League

"THE HOME RULE FOR INDIA LEAGUE" had been a creation of Annie Besant, and it was to serve as a legislative lobby and information center. Its name was changed to "Commonwealth of India League" in 1921. For several years it was moribund, and might have expired without arousing interest had it not been for Krishna Menon. He resurrected it in 1929, under the name "The Indian League."

It had a dingy little office at 156, Strand, one of London's great arteries connecting the West End with the City. It was a decrepit affair, the most conspicuous feature of which was the battered teapot. Krishna Menon appointed himself the "honorary secretary" of the league. He assumed the "honorary" title to indicate that he received no salary. He stayed at his post until 1947, when India became independent.

More than ever, the Indians felt, the need for such an organization was urgent. A place was needed where the people of the capital of the British Empire could obtain information

about the point of view of the Indian National Congress and about the *swaraj*, its aspirations for self-government. A center was needed where lectures on India could be held, no matter how modest the setting, and where distinguished visitors could be invited. A center was needed to issue publications associated with the name of Gandhi, and also, increasingly, with that of Nehru. Also, a corporate image was needed for Krishna Menon himself, to make him part of an "institution," instead of merely a private person. The growth of the institution was to enhance his prestige.

Finally, a meeting place was needed for nostalgic Indian students to get together after their class periods were over, to reminisce about their native land and exchange information. A place where they could peruse newspapers and literature which they lacked the funds to buy.

Bertrand Russell and Sir Stafford Cripps were frequent guests. On one notable occasion Cripps spoke to the league about the "white man's burden." This myth, he said, had currency not only in high-toned Mayfair drawing rooms, but also in the modest homes of millions of working people. They assumed that their own jobs would be jeopardized if India were to become independent. Yet they should know, Sir Stafford said, that an independent India was in their best interest, too. Such an India would be a willing trade partner, and an asset, not a liability.

Sir Stafford spoke the language of the Labour left wing of those days when he added:

I do not suggest that the British Empire can be changed to the B.S.S.R., British Soviet Socialist Republics. But I do suggest that we can develop upon the lines of a closely linked group of nations, planning their economic life for the good of the free peoples of the world. . . . Such a group of countries, associated with

the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a free France and an enfranchised French empire would indeed become a unit of such power and size in the world that it could effectively protect the liberties not only of its own peoples but of other peoples as well.

Krishna Menon the Speaker

Increasingly, Krishna Menon spoke to India League and other audiences. "He was completely absorbed in India," one of his former acquaintances recalls. "He was reading, writing, thinking, dreaming India." "You could almost hear the pounding of his heart," a member of an erstwhile audience noted. "It happened to be a labor group and the audience liked him. He made them feel good in a roundabout way. Some of the members of the audience may have appreciated their own broad-mindedness, by being so appreciative of his strictures. Others thought they fulfilled a party duty by expanding their intellectual horizons. Still others were enthralled by the throbbing hubbub of intellectual companionship. Some of them were fascinated by his un-English ecstasy. Not a few people in the audience were delighted to be anywhere as long as it was not home."

When talking to an audience his features became very mobile; he was another man. The perpetual grimace which looks like a sneer vanished from his face. He seemed to have lost himself in making his points. His eloquent eyes and emotion-laden words helped the audience to grasp the occasional meaning which became hidden in the convolutions of his far from correct grammar. "What he said"—a sophisticated listener recalls—"would not have looked well in cold print, but it sounded well on his warm lips." The intensity of his soul-force compensated for his lack of coherence. Words tumbled

past his heavy lips, getting into one another's way, while his eyes gleamed with rapture. He stepped up the attack against colonialism and imperialism, his *bête noire*. Occasionally his face screwed into a grimace of disdain, while his expressive arms revolved windmill fashion. He liked the intoxication of having people under the control of his mind.

An increasing number of people took notice of him, and, curiously, there is an impression of him in an ephemeral French newspaper of the extreme right, published in Paris, the correspondent of which was looking into the "Bloomsbury mentality" of the so-called intelligentsia. The correspondent described an emotional outburst of Krishna Menon, with some exaggeration, no doubt: "*Il cracha son défi au visage de l'Angleterre*"—he spat his defiance in the face of England.

He asked questions and answered them. "Would the people of India be able to govern themselves?" They had, for centuries, and not any worse than many European countries. And, further, this was a new age, and India had learned many lessons from history. He quoted Macaulay: "One learns swimming in water—not outside of it." He repeated about government what he was in the habit of saying about law: "Government is common sense coupled with human decency." The two of them were twins, anyway. The greatest obstacles could be overcome through good will. Technical skills were in short supply in India, but that was not India's fault. They should be acquired, and Britain could be of the greatest help. Both countries would profit from partnership.

Two points usually emerged in the discussion period. One of them was the communal problem—the relations between the Hindu majority and the Moslem minority. How would

these two communities get along in one country? Were their ways compatible?

He blamed the British officials for having fostered communal discords in application of the old adage of great empires—divide and rule. But, he contended, it was absurd to assert that religious differences played a role in this century. Not only many regions of the Middle East, but also many European countries, were multisectarian. Should there be two Switzerlands—one Catholic and the other Protestant? Should there be two Kingdoms of Iraq—one Shiite and the other Sunnite? Should there be Baptist and Presbyterian states in America? India was a natural unit—as natural a unit as any on the globe. She was governed as a single unit under the British—economically speaking—and the interests of all her parts were interlinked. A dissection of this natural unit would result in catastrophe.

The other standard question he had to tackle referred to Britain's welfare after India's secession. What would happen if the United Kingdom lost the Indian market?

Britain was more likely to lose that market if she kept on holding India, Krishna Menon asserted. The National Congress Party was determined to fight for India's rights in that way which would hurt Britain's economic interests most—by a buyers' strike. Also, a look at the world would show that free countries were better markets than unfree ones, because freedom stimulated all forms of human activity, including imagination, organizational talent and the desire for more goods. Britain was still the mistress of India, and yet she was now fully exposed to the flood of Japanese imports. She was bound to benefit from her free association with an independent India.

And so, Krishna Menon's lectures ended.

"He usually ended his talks with a flourish," said an observer, "finding it difficult to come to a natural stop. When he did, he would assume a posture that looked almost like a defiance, thrusting out his lower lip, as if ready to catch the first hostile syllable. The audience would fall silent. He had said much which could not be digested promptly. The boiler was still working and he still had lots of steam to go. But the audience had enough."

Friends

In the course of time, Krishna Menon collected an impressive array of names to put on the stationery of The India League. The chairman was Bertrand Russell, who remained an inseparable companion. The vice-chairman was the noted cartographer, F. J. Horrabin, long interested in colonial affairs and a Fabian Society stalwart. Anne C. Wilkinson was the treasurer, and Tom William, M.P., was the parliamentary secretary. The letterhead listed now the names of two secretaries, James Marley and V. K. Krishna Menon. We may assume that the working secretary was the man from the Malabar Coast.

The object of the league was now officially stated to be "to support the claim of India for *swaraj* (self-rule)." The league also issued a considerable number of tracts, sold for a penny or twopence. The reader was assured, "Publications of the India League are carefully written and designed to be informative. Every care is taken to verify facts and figures." Then, another word: "When pamphlets appear under the names of the authors, they represent the free expression of their views and their analysis of a particular problem consistent with the general purpose of our publication."

The excellent relations of The India League and the British trade unions were indicated in a note: "Made and printed in Great Britain by the Fairleigh Press (T. U. *throughout*. . .)" with the added emphasis of italics.

The India League tracts all covered various aspects of the same problem: self-government. Some of the pamphlets were written by Krishna Menon, who seems to have been *the* India League most of the time; others were written by Nehru, or by some British sympathizer with the Indian cause.

For instance, Krishna Menon analyzed the low productivity of the Indian peasant in one of the tracts. Was the peasant of the subcontinent an inefficient creature? No, he said, all this was not the farmer's fault, but that of the British ruling circles. It was in their interest to perpetuate the peasant's attachment to tradition. The device served the purpose of keeping the people less efficient, burdened as they were by the accumulated debris of discarded ways.

For instance, why could the American farmer do the work of fifty Indian villagers? He was not fifty times taller. But he *was* fifty times more efficient, because his government—so Krishna Menon argued—gave him a helping hand. And, turning to another subject, why did the British government do so little for education in India? Because educated people often serve to awaken public conscience. They are the type of people who may cause trouble—simply by thinking and talking.

Britain's Prisoner was the title of another pamphlet written by Krishna Menon. The prisoner he wrote about was Jawaharlal Nehru, in jail for the eighth time in nineteen years. He had been brutally assailed by the police while participating in a peaceful demonstration. He had been beaten, arrested, dragged before the provincial magistrate and sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment.

And there was that pamphlet on *Famine Politics* (by Reginald Sorensen), an indictment of British policies by an incensed member of Parliament. Then there were the pamphlets by Nehru, published mainly during World War II: *What India Wants* and *Peace and India*, among others. Nehru had to contend with much opposition within his own Congress Party before he was accepted as the leader, and it is to be noted that Krishna Menon opened the publications of The India League to him, and not to his opponents.

Condition of India

For three years the Simon Commission had been laboring, talking to British officials all over India, analyzing the problems of the subcontinent, and offering remedies. Finally, its findings and recommendations were published in a massive report. The comment of India was: "A cup of milk for the famished lion." The recommendations for provincial self-government—or at least a large measure of it—were implemented. But the central problem remained, and that was the establishment of self-government on a federal level. The obstacles were numerous: the relations of British India and the India of the princes; the communal problem of Hindus and Moslems; and, above all, the problem of British vested interests.

Now Krishna Menon's India League decided to have a hand in this matter, to have a "Simon Commission" of its own travel all over India and talk not only to British officials, who represented only one aspect of the problem, but also to Indian leaders of thought and action, and above all, to the Indian man in the street, and in the field, too.

Members of the delegation were announced as Monica

Whately, Ellen Wilkinson, Leonard W. Matters, and V. K. Krishna Menon, "M.A., B.Sc." They ultimately produced a book under the title *Condition of India*, "Being a Report of the Delegation Sent to India by The India League in 1932, Published by Essential News, 534 Pages, with Tables and Maps."

Members of the delegation sailed from Venice on August 5, 1932, reaching Bombay twelve days later. They spent eighty-three days in India, leaving again by way of Bombay on November 7. They covered the subcontinent from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, and from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. They visited nearly all parts of India, including the troubled region of the Khyber Pass. They consulted all strata of Indian life, including spokesmen of the "silent masses"; representatives of *kisan sabhas*, peasants' groups, in the United Provinces; the "Redshirts" of the Northwest Region; and followers of the *Khilafat* movement in the Punjab, strongly slanted toward Islam. Members of the delegation had to live frugally, since they were not well endowed with funds. On October 22, for instance, they had to spend the night on the terrace of the Temple of the Goddess Ahapuri (Fulfiller of Hopes), dreaming, presumably, about the problem of obtaining funds to complete their tour. They were some £200 short of their minimum budget.

The framework of the delegation was broad. What were the real living standards of India, objectively assayed, and what was the extent of starvation? Too, what was the extent of affluence? What about the government officials, their conduct and influence—the I.C.S., the police and the courts? What was the condition of the jails? What about labor and wages; the press and public opinion? Were the peasants aware of the work of the Congress Party? What was the extent of

Gandhi's influence? What did the people of India want?

Keen eyes were focused on the delegation throughout their tour. The members noticed a bus full of policemen shadowing them at one point. They claimed later that several people they had consulted were subsequently beaten and jailed.

Eventually, the book was published. The Preface was written by Bertrand Russell, chairman of the league. He addressed himself to two practical problems. He recommended that a roundtable conference be convoked without delay so as to prepare the way for full Dominion status, and he also urged that all political prisoners in India be released without delay.

The most significant part of the report contained the conclusions of the members of the delegation about the political awareness of the people of India. "We tested for ourselves in a number of cases"—the delegation reported—"the extent to which the peasant appreciated and understood the causes in the pursuit of which his property and person are subjected to losses and risks. In a Madras village we spent quite a long time in questionings and cross-examination of villagers. We found that the economic and social conditions were very live ones. We heard about poverty, taxation, foreign exploitation, and neglect of education. We found that the villagers knew what the Congress stood for; although they had no illusions about the enormity of the task before the country."

The book contained an extensive historical part, and credit for its writing was given to Krishna Menon.

"A Good Book Is the Best of Friends"

Krishna Menon was now well established in London. He was called to the bar in 1934—as a member of the Middle Temple, London—but he does not seem to have engaged in

much practice, either because legal work did not interest him or else because The India League consumed too much of his time. But he did come to play a role—temporarily at least—in a new development in the field of British book publishing.

It all began with the Lane brothers, Richard, Allen and John, zestful and filled with what they thought was a great idea. They launched a publishing firm, Penguin Books, to publish soft-cover reprints of contemporary “classics” at a very low price. There were three types of these: novels, in orange and white jackets; detective stories, in green and white; and popular biographies, in blue and white.

Most of the established English publishing houses took an extremely dim view of this venture. It was true, they said, that soft-cover books had previously been published in England, when people wanted a slender volume they could slip into their pockets on a trip via that modern means of transportation, the railway. They recalled “The Run and Read Library,” “The Railway Library” and “The Travellers’ Library.” But that had been long ago. In the twentieth century people wanted hard-cover books which they could show on their drawing-room shelves and also, occasionally, read. They would not buy flimsy paperbacks.

The Lane brothers did not have much to lose and so they decided to try just the same. They published reprints, such as Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*, André Maurois’ *Ariel, ou la vie de Shelley* (in English translation); and Eric Linklater’s *Poet’s Pub*. The print orders were very small at first, but then they began to rise.

Bookish Krishna Menon’s dark eyes were wide open for new developments in the publishing world, and he took due notice of the Penguins’ progress. Also he had an idea, which he hastened to bring to the attention of the enterprising Lanes.

The idea was even more enterprising: to move heavily into the nonfiction field, and to publish not only reprints but also original works—by big names.

This was all very well, but the publishers needed some assurance that important schools and other organizations would take note of this venture. Krishna Menon had by then lined up an impressive number of contacts, not only in the political but also in the educational world, contacts which the three enterprising Englishmen lacked as yet. So he introduced the Lanes to influential fellow Britishers whom he knew, and who could be of some help. Among these were the secretary of the British Institute of Adult Education, W. E. Williams, and H. L. Beales, an influential faculty member of Krishna Menon's own alma mater, the London School of Economics. They agreed that the books envisioned by Krishna Menon would be useful in adult education—not the least reason for this being their drastically reduced price—and that therefore they would be ready to lend a hand. This is how the Pelican series of the Penguins came into existence. Krishna Menon became its general editor.

The bang with which Krishna Menon started the Pelicans resounded in the publishing world. Among his first titles, starting with 1937, was a book by George Bernard Shaw. The title of the original volume was *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*. (A Tory author countered with *The Socialist Woman's Guide to Intelligence*.) Krishna Menon himself induced the terrible-tempered Mr. Shaw to add two new sections to the book—one on sovietism, and the other on fascism.

The early titles of the Pelicans reflected Krishna Menon's eclectic tastes. They included a reprint of one of his favorite books by Elie Halévy, *A History of the English People in*

1815; Julian Huxley's *Essays in Popular Science*; *Vision and Design*, by the English painter and critic Roger Eliot Fry; *Social Life in the Insect World*, by Jean-Henri Fabre, the French entomologist; *The Mysterious Universe*, by Sir James Jeans; *Literary Taste*, by Arnold Bennett; and *Civilization*, by Clive Bell, the art and literary critic.

Subsequent volumes included works by Harold Laski, Krishna Menon's idol; the unbelievably prolific H. G. Wells; Harold Nicolson, famed as a diplomat and author; Sir Norman Angell, Nobel Prize laureate; and Wickham Steed.

By this time the Axis powers were throwing their weight around in the world—Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, and the war lords' Japan. Krishna Menon waged his own cold war against them as the editor of the Pelicans. He published reprints of *Blackmail or War?*, by the "French Cassandra," Geneviève Tabouis, and Edgar Ansel Mowrer's *Germany Puts the Clock Back*. Altogether he seems to have edited some thirty books.

Unbusinesslike Krishna Menon had no contract with the businesslike Lanes, and so their cooperation faded into a dense cloud of misunderstandings.

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the pioneering Penguin books, Sir Allen Lane, the managing director, noted:

It was in the political field that we first commenced original publishing, when we found, somewhat to our surprise, a number of authors who were prepared to chance first publication of their books in paper covers at sixpence, with a royalty of a farthing a copy, in place of the more certain returns which publication through normal channels would have ensured. . . .

Thus began the great "paperback revolution" of the publishing business in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER VII

"Friendship Is a Sheltering Tree"

Meeting the Brahman

THE OWLISH-LOOKING LITTLE WIZARD, Mahatma Gandhi, with his *doti* draped around his middle, was the symbol of India. But the world of the thirties was becoming more and more aware of the importance of the "Crown Prince," the successor and the reflection of the image, and therefore himself sanctified—Jawaharlal Nehru. A vigorous worker for Indian independence, he had been president of the Indian National Congress three times.

Nehru was an aristocrat among aristocrats, a Brahman whose ancestral home near the divine abode was in Kashmir, the clouds of which popular belief held to be the sheets of divinity. The family had descended from the mountain peaks to the Gangetic plains, into the city of Allahabad, City of Allah. Its name recalled the injunction of the Prophet of Allah to put the infidel to the sword, for Allahabad had been a Moslem center. It was situated on the plain of the Ganges, most sacred of all Indian rivers, life-dispensing source of the

richest portion of the subcontinent. It symbolized anew the great Indian duality, the communal problem, calling for the reconciliation of seemingly irreconcilable views.

Nehru's father, Motilal, had also been a nationalist leader: member of the United Provinces legislative council, founder of the *Independent*, an Indian nationalist newspaper, former president of the National Congress, member of the Indian legislative assembly, author of the *Nehru Report*, advocating Dominion status for India. In carrying out the recommendation of the report, he sponsored the continuation of a campaign of disobedience against the British.

His son, Jawaharlal, was a product of Harrow and Cambridge, a disillusioned ex-theosophist (unlike Krishna Menon, who never became completely disillusioned with theosophy) and a distinguished "jailbird," imprisoned by the British so many times that he almost lost count. The authorities got so much into the habit of incarcerating him that he was put in jail even by the court of an Indian potentate, the Maharajah of Nabha.

His family background and education might have conditioned him to become an arch-conservative. He might even have become a pillar of the extreme right, had he been born in Britain. But he was born in the City of God—the Moslem God—and he was a Brahman of the Hindus. Also, he was endowed—blessed or cursed—with a strong sense of justice. He was blessed, too—or more likely cursed—with such a strong sympathy for the poor that he was in a state of constant agitation.

His heart was hurt by what he saw in his Indian world. The English, whose basic traits he admired, saw no inconsistency in the discrepancy between their professions of faith and their deeds. They accorded brutal treatment to people

who wanted no more than a portion of the rights the British considered every man's heritage. And he noticed something else too: even though the British lodged him in jails, they treated him less brutally than they treated people of less exalted line, because they knew he was an aristocrat, and because he had a Harrow and Cambridge background.

Nehru agreed with Gandhi that *satyagraha* was the indigenous Indian way to react to the treatment meted out by the British—trying to influence the oppressor through the force of the soul, and not through soulless force. Thus, in a sense, Nehru and the people of India paid a great compliment to the British, the compliment being this: that they believed the British would change their ways even though they were not forced to do so by firearms; and that the soul of the victor would react to the soul of the vanquished, respecting its desire to share in the benefits Englishmen themselves had obtained through their fight for freedom.

Also, Nehru and his companions saw another monster emerging from the primeval mud of man's emotional heritage. This was the ideology which the world had come to know under the name of fascism. It was the glorification of that physical force which the people of India had decided to forsake. It boasted of expressing the innermost nature of modern man, and of being the “wave of the future.” Nehru held to the view that it expressed the innermost nature of a diseased mind.

At the time, neither Nehru nor most of his companions in the struggle for India's freedom saw communism the way the West was to see it later. They looked at it from their own highly selective angle, detaching it from the externals which they did not consider of importance to themselves. What they saw mainly was that communism professed to be anti-imperial-

ist. They also saw that it was violently opposed to fascism. They heard it pay lip service to peace. These professions of faith pleased many of the Congress people. They were not Communists, but most of them professed to be Socialists.

"Socialism for me," Nehru said, "is not merely an economic doctrine which I favor; it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart."

He was in the habit of expounding his creed to large gatherings of people, and they listened to him with reverence. Many of them did not understand the language he spoke (which was Hindustani), while others understood some of it but could not follow the context. That did not matter, however. Simple people in India—and in other regards, perhaps elsewhere, too—are often able to be in tune with a speaker's thoughts without comprehending his words. As was true of Gandhi, people were perfectly happy just to look at Nehru. Perhaps they thought he exuded some emanation of divine grace, and that thus they would be fused with a substance which—like the waters of sacred streams—removed the taint of sin and prepared the soul for an exalted reincarnation.

That was how Jawaharlal Nehru acquired status. People began to call him *Bharat Bushan*—India's Jewel—and also *Tyagamurti*—Embodied Sacrifice. And when the people uttered these words many thought they were approaching the divine substance.

Meeting Krishna Menon

Nehru was to become "Mr. India," the incarnation of the collective will of his countrymen. His stature was at full growth. Eventually, his policies were to be all-pervasive, and his collaborators all of his own choice. Krishna Menon was

perhaps his most important selection. It was therefore an important occasion when the man from Allahabad met the man from Malabar. The year was 1935.

Indians in London knew about Krishna Menon, and were also familiar with the fact that he played an increasingly important role as the spokesman of their continent in the capital of the empire. The India League was also much in the public eye. The National Congress Party—some people said—had a one-man powerhouse in London—Krishna Menon. He had a surprisingly large assortment of important contacts, some of whom were of the highest echelons. The India League book about conditions in India had been published, and had called attention to him. Nehru had good reasons to get in touch with a man who was working so strenuously on behalf of India in the heart of the British Empire.

Nehru visited Europe in 1935. His primary aim was to be at the bedside of his wife, hospitalized in Lausanne. From there he made a side-trip to London, and there he at last met Krishna Menon.

Nehru had work to do in the capital. He was looking for a publisher, and he wanted to get in touch with influential politicians on both sides of the aisle in the House of Commons. Nobody could have been more helpful to him in all these matters than Krishna Menon. He introduced Nehru to a publishing firm which, subsequently, printed his autobiography. He arranged public lectures for him and introduced him to people of influence in Britain's political life.

From the outset, Krishna Menon seems to have made an impression on Nehru. Increasingly, the man from Malabar became the principal London contact of the National Congress.

It was not a monolithic organization, except in one respect

—it single-mindedly wanted *swaraj* for India. But ideological differences on the higher levels were pronounced. There were many leaders with divergent views: Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, of Madras; Abul Kalam Azad, who was to become president of the Congress; Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known also as the “Frontier Gandhi”; and Vallabhbhai Patel, the conservative leader of the “Big Business” wing. Several of these leaders disapproved of Nehru’s socialist views. Krishna Menon stood by Nehru through thick and thin, and this was remembered in years to come.

“Angry Middle-Aged Men”

Both of these men had much in common in their philosophies of life. They were “angry middle-aged men,” incensed by the injustice they saw all around, the great polarization of poverty and wealth, modern society’s incapability to establish objective standards of merit, its tendency to extol dishonesty, especially if it shrouded itself in hypocrisy. Both were Socialists, and that meant to them an attempt to solve contemporary problems through a judicious adjustment of the interests of the individual to the social weal. Unlike many of their fellow Congressmen, they were neither provincial nor parochial, but internationalists who perceived India’s role within the context of Asia and of mankind. They were “westerners,” who shared the view that the Occident could offer some solutions which the Orient lacked the ability to deliver. They saw modern civilization as the potential instrumentality geared to the higher expectations of modern man.

Both men lived in self-imposed exile, one in England, the other in India. Krishna Menon paid only one visit to India in

an entire generation. Nehru lived in exile in his native country. As he once wrote:

I have become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach of life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern but India clings to me, as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways; and behind me lie, somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred, or whatever the number may be, of Brahmans. I cannot get rid of either that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both part of me and, though they help me in both the East and West, they also create in me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself. I am a stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling.

Krishna Menon seems to have entertained the idea of settling in England. But he had no real home there, and one still has the very definite impression even today that he is the “perennial wanderer”—not just the globetrotter, but the man who somehow seems not to have been born into the setting which would have been his own choice. His constant travels in the world indicate his predilections.

The relationship between Nehru and Krishna Menon was not a conventional friendship. It was a kinship of the sort the Germans call *Wahlverwandschaft*, the elective kinship of people who become brothers, not through consanguinity, but through consensus, the meeting of minds. It is a kinship which the passage of years would not dissolve.

“Ring out the Darkness of the Land”

“A far away occurrence, unconnected with India,” Nehru wrote in his recollections, “affected me greatly and made me

change my decision [to give up the chairmanship of the annual session of the National Congress]. This was the news of General Franco's revolt in Spain. I saw this rising, with its background of German and Italian assistance, developing into a European or even a world conflict."

It was in the same vein that Krishna Menon wrote about the Spanish Civil War in London's *Labour Monthly*, which was to become one of his most important public forums: "Congress realizes that the struggle between democratic progress and Fascist reaction is of great consequence to the future of the world and will affect the future of imperialism in India."

The year when civil war broke out in Spain, 1936, marked a milestone: it revealed the great fissure in the world. Why should Spain have become such a vital issue? She had been perambulating on the periphery of history for centuries, and now she was sucked into the center.

The weak-kneed Spanish monarchy having been overthrown, political oscillations had followed for years, as the old order tried to reassert itself. The new order was inchoate as yet, inclined to run to extremes. Here was an illustration of the Marxist dialectic, as Krishna Menon saw it. The thesis was the old order—feudalism; the antithesis, the new republican system trying to modernize Spain. What was the Hegelian synthesis to be? The government was as yet the receptacle of uncoordinated ideas aimed at progress, ideas that constantly collided with one another. And then there was the negation of these ideas—the concepts of the *grandees*, supported by an obscurantism which was almost medieval, and which drew on the support of the bulk of the officer corps, headed by Francisco Franco.

The outside world began to take a deep interest in all this.

Many people saw it as a battle of profound historical significance, and Krishna Menon echoed these views. Also, his *bêtes noires*, the Fascists, were turning Spain into a battleground of ideologies, and a proving ground for their modern arms. Why did they need such a proving ground? Because, Krishna Menon thought (and expounded his view in public), the Fascists wanted to test their arms in genuine battle situations, and because they were bent on testing the fortitude of human decency. For years now, Germany's Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, had been raving about the softness of the West. France was decadent, he had screamed, and America was *verjudet*, under the thumbs of Jews.

Italian fighting units were soon on their way to the battlefields of Spain, while German fighters descended from the skies. The Soviets offered some aid to the Spanish government, but the western powers, headed by Britain and France, were afraid of the spread of the conflict, and assumed a stance of neutrality. Since the Axis powers controlled most of the accesses to Spain, the Russians found the going hard.

Two years after the outbreak of the war in Spain, Krishna Menon and Nehru visited the government-controlled part of the country. By that time anti-Fascist elements outside Spain, mainly Communists, had begun to send in contingents to form an International Brigade. When units of the brigade marched by, Spaniards habitually cheered "*Viva Rusia.*" As it happened, few of the contingents contained a majority of Russians.

Bombs were falling nightly while the two men visited Barcelona, then the provisional capital of the Spanish government. "There I saw much else," Nehru wrote, "that impressed me powerfully; and there in the midst of want and destruction and ever-impending disaster, I felt more at peace with myself

than anywhere else in Europe. There was light there, the light of determination and of doing something worth while."

Nehru and Krishna Menon called on some of the key people on the government side. They learned certain lessons there which, they thought might stand them in good stead should they have a free India one day. They visited the fighting sector under the command of "General Lister," a former stonemason. He was an effective commander, whose sector gave a good account of itself. Here was a proof to the visitors from India that Britain's top-drawer Sandhurst had no monopoly of turning out good military men. They could not help thinking of the many "Colonel Blimps" of the British Empire, named for the unimaginative military man immortalized by the English caricaturist David Low. "Alas for this old type," Nehru noted, "which shines so much at polo, bridge and on the parade grounds, but is so out of place here."

The two men from India also met the foreign minister of the Spanish Republic, Alvarez del Vayo, and again they could not help thinking of the solutions of some of the anticipated problems of a free India. The Spanish foreign minister had been a journalist, not a professional diplomat. Yet he was giving a good account of himself at his exposed post, and was certainly doing no worse than some of the successful professionals. India, too, would, no doubt, be able to draw on such hidden talents.

Finally, they met Doña Dolores Ibarruri, a Basque miner's daughter, homely, middle-aged, the mother of adult children, and a legendary person because of her dedication to her cause. She was known as *La Passiomaria*. She spoke to them "fiercely and ardently in a torrent of lilting Spanish."

Then Krishna Menon and Nehru went their different ways, the one back to England and the other to India and, eventu-

ally, to jail. They were now linked together in closer bonds because they had been under fire together and had seen sights they hoped never to see again.

A year after their visit, the backbone of the Spanish armed forces fighting on the side of the government was broken, and a victorious General Franco marched into Madrid. Hitler and Mussolini—and no doubt the Japanese military people, too—now thought they had proof that the western democracies were unable or unwilling to fight off their challenge. World War II broke out later in the year.

CHAPTER VIII

In the British Labour Party

Back-Benchers and "Young Turks"

THE MAN FROM the Malabar Coast was a British subject, with all the rights and duties appertaining to his status. He kept on increasing his political associations, in addition to the hundred members of Parliament who were formally linked to The India League. In addition to the stars of the stature of the Webbs, Laski and Cripps, he had the support of many back-benchers and a particularly large number of "Young Turks," glad to be associated with such a worthy cause as Indian independence. The Labour Party was now of governmental timber, and was bound to be swept back into 10 Downing Street in the regular course of events. Yet there was a vast difference between having the back-benchers cheer The India League, and having the official endorsement of the party. This was what Krishna Menon had tried to attain at Southport.

The Conference at Southport

The annual conference of the Labour Party met at Southport in the autumn of 1934. Krishna Menon undertook to submit a resolution about India for the conference's official endorsement. It expressed the conviction that it was imperative that the "principle of self-determination for the establishment of full self-government for India should be implemented forthwith."

"Tory Socialists" was the name Krishna Menon gave to the conservatives within the Labour Party. One of these was Arthur Henderson, a member of Labour governments. Therefore, he spoke not for the back-benchers and "Young Turks" but for the entire party. British Labour represented not only an ideology but also a set of economic interests.

Theoretically, the Labour Party was interested in all sorts of noble causes—such as the emancipation of the colonies—but theory and practice were rolling on different tracks. Labour could not afford to endanger its chances among the electorate on the sensitive issue of India.

The Trades Union Congress formed a solid core of Labour representation, having provided the initial stimulus and also a large portion of the finances. Industrial workers alone could not decide the outcome of the national election, but they did form a strong phalanx of public opinion. The votes of the white-collar workers were also needed. Their numbers were increasing in Britain, as in other parts of the industrialized world. Also, the enhanced sophistication of purchasers' buying habits was shifting the emphasis to the service professions. This growing middle class was saturated with the traditional British attitude that the prosperity of the country was linked to the unimpaired maintenance of the empire, the

pivot of which was India. Many of the industrial workers shared this view.

Krishna Menon backed his argument with an appeal to Britain's sense of justice and equity. Henderson, the statesman, argued on behalf of the "machine" which was the executive of the Labour Party. In the end, Henderson won. He was diplomatic but firm, not conceding that he was entering into a compromise with basic principles. Staunchly, he refused to give an undertaking on behalf of the executive that a Labour government would carry out a policy of self-determination for India. "We have laid down very clearly," he said, "that we were going to consult, if possible, all sections of the Indian people. That ought to satisfy everybody."

It did not satisfy Krishna Menon or his Indian friends, but at this point the man from Asia had come into collision with the practical facts of Britain's political life. The ideals of the Labour Party had—when the votes were counted—turned out to have been conditioned by what its constituents deemed to be their economic interests.

The Purification of Politics

Was there another incarnation in store for Krishna Menon? His ardor, articulateness and ability to find the right contacts and to convince people with his intensity almost predetermined his entry into the field of politics. Several of his friends encouraged him to make politics his career in Britain. They were thinking, in this regard, not only of his own interest, but also of the good of the Labour Party. The British government of those days spoke in the name of a global empire. Yet nearly all her politicians had been born and bred in Britain. Unmistakably, Krishna Menon was from India, but

he was now perfectly at home in Britain. And—an added advantage—he “understood India.” (His well-wishers did not realize that India was too variegated to be “understood” by a single individual.) He would serve as a bridge between East and West. The British Labour Party could claim to be more representative of the entire empire if Krishna Menon played a nationally recognized role in it.

The launching of a political career follows certain ground rules in Britain, as anywhere else. One starts at the bottom of the ladder, where one does not fall too far if one fails. There the junior politician may be looked over by the elders, and have his work, usefulness and ethics analyzed.

British Labour has always prided itself on being the people's party—grass roots, not aloof, like the Conservatives. Its members of Parliament are mostly of the people, living among them, thinking their thoughts, speaking out their thoughts, and above all, dropping their *h*'s. The Tories were interested only in the mansions and countinghouses of the rich, Labour Party stalwarts would say. Labour, on the other hand, was interested in a broad spectrum of local political organizations. Of particular interest to Labour were the fields of education, sanitation, aid for the infirm and the aged, maternal cases, libraries and art. The party took a deep interest in low-cost housing in the scorched-earth area of England: the slum sections and the overcrowded industrial districts. These everyday problems had to be looked after in the municipalities and the boroughs.

This aspect of Labour “democracy” was the special field of Krishna Menon's old contacts, the Webbs. Indeed, several of their basic books dealt with such problems: one on industrial democracy, another on the consumers' cooperative movement, and, of course, their monumental six-volume study,

The English Local Government. Krishna Menon was a disciple not only of Harold Laski but also of the Webbs, and having come from an underprivileged country, he displayed great interest in the underdeveloped areas of England.

He joined the South-west St. Pancras Labour Party, in one of London's metropolitan boroughs. In the very center of it was Camden Town, where he made his home for several years. He was elected to the St. Pancras Metropolitan Borough Council from the 4th ward for the usual term of three years and was subsequently reelected. The Council is the legislative body of the Borough.

The minutes in the possession of Deputy Town Clerk, D. C. Whitlum show that Krishna Menon took an active part in Council meetings. He moved at one Council meeting during the war that the Borough should petition the British government to forbid any form of propaganda designed to produce racial strife. Particularly, he moved that the British National Party, whose main aim was to "foster disunity," should be banned. He accompanied his motion with comments on the growth of anti-Semitic feeling, which he "viewed with apprehension."

In another motion he went on record in favor of the "municipalization" of certain construction projects of the Borough. Instead of farming out such work to constructors, he moved that the Borough itself should engage in such activities, to reduce costs.

Almost from the beginning to the end of his work on the Council, Krishna Menon was the chairman on the Libraries Committee. At his recommendation the Committee set up an Arts and Civic Council of which he also became the chairman. He was successful in obtaining additional appropriations for the libraries, the number of which increased considerably. As

to the new Council, he set the machinery into motion which resulted in the establishment of the St. Pancras annual Festival of the Performing Arts, which has been imitated in municipal boroughs and in other parts of England.

Has Krishna Menon's influence been felt on the catalogues of the libraries? A perusal of the catalogues show that the books of his erstwhile *guru*, Harold Laski, are very well represented. The books of Lenin are far less well represented than those of Laski, the libraries containing only his most essential publications. I was told that he exerted no pressure on the librarians to buy his own favorites.

Krishna Menon was one of the most articulate and vocal members of the Council. These are the characterizations one hears about him: "Dominant personality . . . lively . . . expressed himself forthrightly . . . took part in debates with vehemence." Some of his colleagues liked him, others disliked him. And one—a member of the Labour Party—once called him a "bloody Bolshie." Krishna Menon threatened to sue him. He received an apology and the two men established amicable relations.

W. Timothy Donovan, solicitor, and onetime leader of the Conservatives in St. Pancras, says that he got on very well with Krishna Menon, whom he found a sensible man, with whom it was both possible and pleasurable to talk on many subjects.

The last time Krishna Menon was reelected to his Council seat was in 1945, again from Ward 4 and again for three years. He was able to serve only part of his term. He was appointed High Commissioner of India to the Court of St. James in London, the highest diplomatic post in his country's keeping.

He returned to the St. Pancras Town Hall in 1955 to receive the honorary freedom of the Borough. In his speech of acceptance, Krishna Menon said that he had spent many happy

years in the Borough and that he acquired his political education there. His name was carved on a large marble slab, following the name of another who until then had been the only honorary freeman of St. Pancras: George Bernard Shaw.

"The Bark and the Bite"

As he continued to do his work well, opposition to him abated. Word got around that his bite was not as bad as his bark. It was now his ambition to be nominated as the Labour candidate for South-west Pancras. He had to obtain the approval of a screening committee which was to examine him on his views. His friends had done much lobbying, and it seemed that the coveted prize was within his grasp. All seemed to be set for his acceptance, when, according to a contemporary newspaper account, the "devil" in him got the upper hand, and brought about a change in the atmosphere. He severely antagonized one of the groups on whose approval his selection depended. There was no apparent reason for his doing so. When the ballots were counted, he fell one vote short of the majority. Again he blamed color prejudice. "Krishna Menon's skin color was very much in his favor," a member of the screening committee commented. "We did think that the place of such an able man was in the House of Commons. We also thought that parliament should not be reserved for lily-whites."

One of those who remembered him from those distant days has furnished the following appraisal: "He was honestly fighting injustice not only in India but also in St. Pancras. He saw it in every corner. He was obviously conscious of his being different and that affected our relationship occasionally. I understood him very well, but he was a little suspicious."

He had another chance to climb the political ladder. This time he was to represent Dundee, the Scottish town, in the House of Commons. (Britain has no special residence requirements for candidacy in the Commons, and so it did not matter that Krishna Menon was a resident of London.)

But again he failed to reach his goal. He now claims that the war intervened and there were no elections. A sheet provided by the Indian Information Service contains the following passage:

In 1939, Menon was chosen as Parliamentary Labour candidate for Dundee, but before he could contest the elections he resigned from the party over its Indian policy. Then, as always with him, India came first. He rejoined the party in 1945 after its annual conference had passed the famous "Independence of India" resolution against the advice of the executive.

And a London periodical noted that just before the crucial Labour Party screening, Krishna Menon had accepted an invitation to speak on India at a bazaar organized by the official Communist mouthpiece, the *Daily Worker*. Even then, the executive of the Labour Party detested the Communists as much as the Fascists.

The failure of all these attempts almost suggests the possibility that Krishna Menon was filled with a "failure wish," at least as far as a seat in the House of Commons was concerned. Or did his intuition suggest to him that he bide his time, awaiting another chance, in a different field?

CHAPTER IX

Facing the Whirlwind

The Battle of Britain

IN THE AUTUMN of 1939 Adolf Hitler marched his armies into Poland, allegedly to wrest the "Corridor" from Polish hands. That Corridor connected Poland—dismembered at the end of the eighteenth century and resurrected after World War I—with the Baltic, thus affording her a maritime outlet. In establishing the Corridor, however, Germany had been severed. And now Hitler was to eliminate the Corridor and unite Germany.

Great Britain and France, which had mutual-assistance pacts with Poland, declared war on Hitler. The German "strong man" was becoming too strong, dangerous to the European balance of power which the two great western nations had undertaken to uphold. The Nazi armor made short shrift of Poland. For a year, however, the western front remained quiet. This was the "sit-down war." Then the Nazi armies turned westward, and France was defeated in a matter of days. Britain's expeditionary force, never very large, was successfully evacuated from the Continent, and

Europe belonged to Hitler. Now the Germans' air armadas launched their devastating campaign on the United Kingdom, and the Battle of Britain was on. How long would the little island be able to resist the pressure of the presumed supermen of the Third Reich?

The web of railway lines which crisscrossed Camden Town and much of the rest of the borough of St. Pancras was a nerve center of Britain. The terminal station of the Great Northern Railway was there, as were those of the Midland Railway and the London and North-Western Railway. Because of this, St. Pancras was exposed to heavy enemy attacks. Krishna Menon, as one of the three wartime municipal councilors of St. Pancras, was vitally concerned with civil defense, and appears to have served diligently and well in this capacity. But the rigors of the Battle of Britain never really obscured his central preoccupation. He was equally concerned with the Battle of India. He had his lines of communications with Pandit Nehru. "War and India," Nehru asked in one of his numerous wartime publications, "what are we to do?"

The Simon Commission, which had inquired into the situation of India, had not come up with a solution acceptable to the people of India. Again there were the great problems—the communal question between the Hindus and Moslems; the question of the hundreds of princely states; and, above all, the insistence of the British government on not relinquishing its hold on some of the most important departments of the federal administration. However, the provinces of British India were now accorded very extensive home rule rights, and most of them were manned by Congress governments.

The British government had committed a very grave blunder, from the point of view of India, at the beginning of the war. Without consulting representative Indian political or-

ganizations, it had declared war on the Axis powers, in the name of subcontinent, too. "That was a slight hard to get over, for it signified that imperialism functioned as before."

Germany and Japan, the two pivots of the Axis, seemed to be invincible. All the powers of hell were let loose as the Nazis began spurting eastward, and the Japanese westward. The Third Reich fanned out from Poland, overcoming Soviet resistance, attempting to sever the Russians' jugular vein at Moscow, to lay its hands on the Caucasian oil wells, and to destroy the Soviets' lifeline with the North, centering on Leningrad. The Japanese overcame the resistance of all the major western powers—the British, French and Dutch—grabbing countless islands in the great tropical archipelagoes. American forces trying to save the Philippines were overwhelmed.

At the rate these two warlike nations were moving, their global pincers might soon close, and then the world would be in their hands. They needed oil more than anything else, to feed and lubricate their modern supermachines of destruction. Breaking into the Caucasus in the north, and crashing across the Burma-India mountain ramparts, the two nations might soon have in their hands the world's largest oil reserves, those of the Middle East.

One of the Indian leaders, former mayor of Calcutta and Congress president Subhas Chandra Bose, had formed a "Forward Bloc," left India and was heading an Indian puppet government in Japanese-held Singapore. Commenting on these events in the darkest days of the war, Britain's wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote, "The attitude of the Congress Party worsened with the Japanese menace."

As a matter of fact, there were conflicting trends within the Congress Party. Gandhi wanted the policy of non-cooper-

ation with Britain to be continued. Rajagopalachari held that constitutional questions could wait until after the war, and that the important thing was to cooperate with Britain, if a national government were formed in India. Nehru maintained that although India sympathized with Britain, a free India would be much more effective for defense.

Meanwhile there were more than enough Indian volunteers ready to serve in the British forces at home and abroad. An Indian army of more than a million was actually in existence by 1942, and volunteers poured in on the recruiting centers at the rate of fifty thousand a month.

Indian troops subsequently earned high commendation on far-flung battlefronts. They helped liberate Ethiopia from the Fascist Blackshirts; fought in the crucial battles of North Africa, standing ready to protect the Nile, the Fertile Crescent of the eastern Mediterranean, and the frontiers of India; and participated in the Allied campaign against the "soft underbelly of the Axis," in Italy.

Writing about Indian troops in the North African campaign, General Dwight D. Eisenhower noted in his book *Crusade in Europe*: "Montgomery's Eighth Army was very colorful and probably the most cosmopolitan army to fight in North Africa since Hannibal. It included, in addition to English units, Highlanders, New Zealanders, Indians (including Gurkhas, with their *kukris*—long, curved knives with which they beheaded their victims. . . .)"

The Labour Monthly

The organs in which Krishna Menon expressed his views on the war situation were the pamphlets of The India League and the *Labour Monthly*.

That publication was founded in 1921, and has been in continuous publication since then. From the beginning to the present day its editor has been R. Palme Dutt, onetime editor of the Communist *Daily Worker* for two years before World War II, and also an executive member and vice-chairman of the Communist Party in Britain. The monthly described itself as a "magazine for international labor" which was to "report developments of the labor movement in other countries." Judging by its title, one might gain the impression that it is or was connected with the Labour Party, but in fact, it has never been so connected.

The monthly has always paid particularly close attention to developments in the Soviet Union—always favorably reported. Reporting on the activities of the magazine, Mr. Dutt noted: "From the beginning of 1928 readers of the monthly will find one after another of the classic writings of J. V. Stalin."

He noted further: "The policy of British imperialism . . . was regularly exposed, while document after document was printed, giving first-hand information of the international labor movement."

The articles it printed were largely written by Communists and pro-Communists: Lenin, Karl Radek, Henri Barbusse, Harry Pollitt, the British Communist, and William Z. Foster, the late American Communist leader. The monthly also published numerous pamphlets on dialectical materialism and Communism; on the Soviet press; on the mobilization of the "civilian front" in the Soviet Union during the war. Some of the pamphlets contained descriptions of the Communist parties in different countries, and studies on Marxism and Leninism.

Krishna Menon and the War

It is perhaps instructive to note that Krishna Menon wrote not one word about the war in the *Labour Monthly* until the summer of 1941, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. Until then, Hitler and Stalin had observed a non-aggression pact.

Then, suddenly, in an article entitled "Freedom's Battle" in the August, 1941, issue of the *Labour Monthly*, Krishna Menon wrote: "The embattled ranks of the free Soviet people, their formidable weapons, their impenetrable armour of steel, hold in deadly combat the ruthless and aggressive might of Nazi imperialism."

Simultaneously, he lashed out at the British for their handling of public opinion in India. He charged them with riding roughshod over India, and behaving as if the battle for freedom were their exclusive concern. He also charged that the young bloods in the British Indian Civil Service contained Fascist elements. But, he warned, Nazi propaganda would fall on barren soil in India. The people of India wanted to be set free so as to be able to contribute their full share in the fight against Fascist tyranny. "Release India!" he demanded. "Release India for freedom's battle!"

Krishna Menon sounded the keynote of his wartime policy in the January, 1942, issue of the *Labour Monthly*. He warned that the British were in a bad way, and needed all the help they could get. Why, then, he asked, did they not turn to India and try to harness her powerful forces? There was an explanation, he asserted. By turning to India the British would have to augment her industrial potential, and that they did not want to do. There was nothing wrong with this from the point of view of the strategic interests of the war, but there

was a lot wrong with it from the point of view of Britain's anticipated postwar interests. The British did not want to build up India's industries, he charged, because to do so would weaken the stranglehold of their monopolies.

Therefore, the British employed only a small portion of India's contingent of some 150 million adult males. Although their maritime losses were enormous, the British were not laying the keels of any ships in India. Indeed, he asserted, they had built only one vessel there in an entire century. Meanwhile, the Soviet government was drawing on the manpower potential of a vast hinterland and effecting a massive industrial transfer from the imperiled areas in the west to Soviet Central Asia.

The June, 1942, issue of the same monthly contained another article by Krishna Menon, in which he charged that the British were sabotaging the war effort by their do-nothing policy in India. The British were failing to use the only effective defense of the subcontinent, which was the whole-hearted participation of her people in the war effort. In the same way as China and the Soviet Union were shielded by the massed levies of their people, India must also be protected. And India would do no less if she had a government of her own.

The famine in India was yet another topic on which Krishna Menon wrote in the *Labour Monthly*, in the issue of May, 1943. People in India were dying, Krishna Menon wrote, not only in the cities but also in the rural areas, and yet the British were exporting food from India. Also, the transport system was wholly inadequate, and surplus areas could not ship food to the deficiency regions. Food exports from India must be stopped, and an all-Indian government formed to take matters in hand.

Enter Franklin D. Roosevelt

The man from Malabar also had contacts with diplomatic circles. India was important for the Allies from more than one point of view. She provided excellent manpower, and also important raw materials. But the Axis enemy could use her in its propaganda war. "Look," Berlin and Tokyo said, "the Allies call themselves the 'free world.' What about these hundreds of millions of Indians?" Also, how were the free countries to face the postwar world, weighted down as they were by colonialism? The United States was especially interested in this issue, having had its own experience with colonial rule.

It was in view of these facts that Jawaharlal Nehru suggested to Krishna Menon that he see what he could do through his contacts to reach the ears of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Chiang Kai-shek of China, to enroll their services in the common war effort by persuading Britain of the urgency of the Indian problem.

Traces of Krishna Menon's efforts on this score—fused with many other efforts—may possibly be detected in the uncommonly active interest President Roosevelt displayed in India. His active interest was aroused when Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that Sir Stafford Cripps would carry certain British proposals to India for discussion with Indian leaders. Roosevelt sent Churchill a long cable on India on March 12, 1942.

"Of course," he wrote, "this is a subject about which all of you good people know far more than I do and I have felt much diffidence in making any suggestions concerning it."

He had tried, he wrote, to consider it from the point of view of history, and had gone back to the inception of the

United States government with the hope that this might provide some new thoughts regarding India.

The thirteen colonies, he continued, had set themselves up as separate sovereignties during the American Revolution, under a temporary government with a Continental Congress which he described as a "body of ill-defined powers and large inefficiencies. Following the war, a stopgap government was formed under the Articles of Confederation and this continued until real union was achieved under the Constitution."

Roosevelt suggested a somewhat similar process for India: the setting up of a government to be headed by a small group of representatives of different religions and areas, occupations and castes. It would be representative of the existing British provinces and of the Council of the Princes. It would be recognized as the temporary Dominion Government. This group would then be charged with the duty of considering the structure of the permanent government of India. In the meantime, it would exercise executive and administrative authority over public services, such as finances, railways and telegraphs. "This is, of course, none of my business," Roosevelt added, "and for the love of heaven do not bring me into this, though I want to be of help."

Commenting on this letter, Robert Sherwood remarked in his book *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, "It is probable that the only part of the cable with which Churchill agreed was Roosevelt's admission that 'this is none of my business.'"

Harry Hopkins, the President's alter ego, remarked subsequently that he did not think any suggestion from Roosevelt to Churchill in the entire war period was so wrathfully received as the one relating to the solution of the Indian problem.

Sir Stafford Comes and Goes

It looked early in 1942 as if Britain needed all the friends she could get, during a war in which the enemy forces appeared to have a tremendous preponderance. It was political wisdom, therefore, to make friends with India. With this in mind, the government of Mr. Churchill decided to make a new offer to the people of India. It was Sir Stafford Cripps, close friend of The India League, whom Churchill dispatched to New Delhi to break the deadlock. Cripps carried on negotiations with the Congress Party, the Moslem League and other corporate bodies and individuals. This was Sir Stafford's offer:

India was to become a Dominion, linked to the United Kingdom and the other Dominions "by a common allegiance to the crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs." The status of India was to be similar to that of Canada: complete independence within the empire. However, India had problems which Canada did not face. She was crowded with hundreds of princely states, having special treaty relations with Britain. What was to happen with them? The Cripps proposals stipulated that no state or Indian province should be obliged to join the union. The most important immediate feature of the proposals was the understanding that the viceroy's executive council would become almost entirely Indian, and would represent the leading groups in India. But it was to operate under the potential veto of the viceroy, rather than as a national government. All these arrangements were to enter into force only after the war.

Lord Privy Seal Sir Stafford Cripps cabled to Churchill on April 11, 1942:

I have tonight received a long letter from Congress president stating that Congress is unable to accept proposals. Rejection on widest grounds and not solely on defense issue, although it indicates that while Congress would agree that commander-in-chief should have freedom to control conduct of war and connected activities as commander-in-chief and defense member, proposed formula left functions of defense member unduly restricted. Main ground of rejection is, however, that in the view of Congress there should be immediately a national government and that without constitutional changes there should be definite assurances in conventions which would indicate that the new government would function as a free government whose members would act as members of a cabinet in a constitutional government.

Sir Stafford Cripps returned to Britain. A fortnight later the All-Indian Congress Committee reiterated the line adopted by the Working Committee in its negotiations with the Lord Privy Seal. It confirmed the stand that it was impossible for Congress to "consider any schemes of proposals which retain even a partial measure of British control in India." Britain must relinquish her hold.

The Aftermath

The failure of the Cripps mission was a cause of deep disappointment to Krishna Menon, because he had expected so much from the Lord Privy Seal. He published an India League pamphlet about it: *An Authoritative Statement on the Break-down of the New Delhi Negotiations*, written by Nehru.

"We strongly condemn," Nehru wrote, "the provisions of the British proposals that the rulers of the Indian states should nominate the representatives of the states to the Constituent Assembly, thus ignoring the rights of the entire population of the states."

He was in strong disagreement also with the provisions that would have allowed the rulers to remain outside of the proposed Indian Union.

Now that the negotiations had broken down, what was to be the attitude of the Indian leaders in the Congress Party toward the Allied war effort? The leadership decided that the Japanese, whose forces were now standing on the eastern boundaries of India, must be resisted. "We are not going to surrender," Nehru wrote. "In spite of all that has happened, we are not going to embarrass the British war effort in India. The problem for us is how to organize our own."

The same line was taken in an India League pamphlet, dated February, 1943, which Krishna Menon wrote. By that time the skies had begun to clear. The Axis armor had met its match in North Africa and on the Volga. The turning points were in Egypt's western desert, El Alamein, and along Russia's "river of sorrow." Shrill-toned Krishna Menon declared that this was the most propitious time to demonstrate Allied unity, and that friendship between India and Britain would give the Allies the final push. Release the political prisoners, he demanded. End repression! Relieve the famine! Withdraw the ban on Congress! Cancel the orders for collective fines! Agree to the establishment of a provisional government of Indian unity! Recognize India's national independence!

Krishna Menon insisted again and again on Britain's failure to draw India into the war. In another League pamphlet, *The Situation in India*, he repeated the charge that the failure of the British to make full use of India's resources inhibited the chances for the most effective prosecution of the war. He accused the British also of misleading the public on that score. They were boasting, he said, that they had increased the Indian Air Force by a thousand per cent since the out-

break of the war. They had had one squadron at the beginning, and had ten now. They also maintained that the size of the Royal Navy in India had been increased 70 per cent. That navy now consisted of fifty small boats.

Warm Words for the Soviets

The India League pamphlets contained increasing praise for the Soviet Union, some of which came from the man who wore one of the greatest names in India: Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize-winning writer. The speeches delivered at the meeting commemorating his eightieth birthday were reprinted in one of the pamphlets.

Tagore spoke with great warmth of Soviet life: "I have been privileged to witness the unstinted energy with which Soviet Russia was trying to right disease and illiteracy. Her industry and application have helped Soviet Russia, steadily liquidating ignorance, poverty and abject humiliation from the face of the vast continent. Her people do not observe any distinction between one class and another. . . ."

The titular head of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Kalinin, chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, also found his way into the publications put out by The India League. *The Caucasus Defends India* was the title of his piece, culled from the Soviet press. "The Caucasus," he wrote, "is the most enlightening demonstration of the reforming and beneficial effect of the Soviet system on the psychology and character of the people."

The United States was a member of the Grand Alliance, and its leader, President Roosevelt, was better known to the world than "Papa" Kalinin. Yet there is no record of any of

Roosevelt's statements having ever found their way into the publications of The India League.

The Communal Problem Again

One of the reasons for the failure of the Cripps mission was the perennial communal problem—the conflict between Hindus and Moslems. Krishna Menon shared the view for a time that Cripps himself had become an instrument of Britain's traditional policy of divide and rule, and that his proposals reflected the "Ulster mind"—a reference to the part of Ireland which the British had retained after having granted independence to the rest of the Emerald Isle.

The Moslem leader was a lean and sallow-faced barrister, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. He was *jinnah* (lean) in looks, but stout in his ambitions. The time was past now when he had worked with the Congress in harmony; he had changed his mind about India's future after the 1937 election which saw the Congress triumphant. As president of the Moslem League, he now advanced the idea that there should be, not one India, but two—one Hindu, the other Moslem. The name of the Moslem part of the subcontinent should be Pakistan. The name of the projected country was synthetic; it meant "Land of the Pure." The implication was clear. India was impure. But how was Pakistan to be carved out of India, since the Moslems did not live in contiguous territories? Their main places of settlements were in the Northwest and the Northeast, a thousand miles apart. Let there be two wings in this Land of the Pure, Jinnah said.

The war seemed to have lasted for ages, but now the horizon was clearing. The tidal wave of Axis triumphs abated, and the militarists' juggernauts shifted into reverse. North

Africa was clear of the Axis, and the Soviets were pushing the Germans westward with unrelenting force. In the Pacific, too, the fortunes of war were changing. There the United States had begun its campaign of island-hopping, securing pivotal points while enemy regions in between were starved into submission.

Still, India was facing the postwar period with apprehension. Should independence come, what form would it assume?

CHAPTER X

“Thy Spirit, Independence, Let Me Share”

Britain Waives the Rules

BRITAIN LOST World War II. She was, to be sure, a partner in the Grand Alliance which crushed the Axis, but she had been a senior partner at the outset, and she ended as a junior partner. Asia's millions had learned during the war that Britain was not invincible . . . nor France . . . nor the Netherlands. They had been subdued by Asians, the Japanese. Then along came America, the ultimate victor.

Nationalism—the cult of the godlike nation, absolutely sovereign, infallible, omnipotent—was sweeping Asia. It was an elemental force, and the masses were ready to rise. Behind the mountainous backbone of the continent there was the Soviet Union—almost crushed into a pulp, but finally victorious. Creating disaffection was its specialty, and Asia might follow its lead, should the West fail to heed the signals. Britain might be able to hold onto her empire for years, but eventually she would be thrown out of Asia. Relinquishing her hold on

the colonies now, she might perhaps salvage the essence of imperial preference—a profitable trade. Britain was enlightened enough to see the unmistakable signs, and she abruptly reversed her traditional policy.

Winston Churchill's stature had grown enormously during the war. He had already been a legend, but now words were beginning to fail even the most ardent eulogists in describing his greatness. There was a general election at the end of July, 1945. Churchill turned in on the night of the election believing, in his own words, "that the British people would wish me to continue my work."

Then came the dawn.

"I did not wake till nine o'clock and when I went into the Map Room [for election returns] the first results had begun to come in. . . . By noon it was clear that the Socialists would have a majority. At luncheon my wife said to me: 'It may well be a blessing in disguise.' I replied: 'At the moment it seems quite effectively disguised.'"

The Labourites had ridden into power on the crest of a smashing victory. In accordance with the traditional practice, His Majesty then tendered the seals of office to the leader of the Labour Party, the Right Honorable Clement Richard Attlee, the former Deputy Prime Minister. His Chancellor of the Exchequer was Sir Stafford Cripps. Herbert Stanley Morrison became the Leader of the House of Commons and Lord President of the Council; Ernest Bevin was given the post of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The key men were Attlee and Bevin, "conservative" Socialists, and it was they who made a historic decision about India. The waiting game was over—the old game of promising India a future pledge to be implemented at a still more distant time. Now, independence was to be India's with no delay.

If India wished to remain a member of the free association of free nations which went by the name of the Commonwealth, that was well and good. If, on the other hand, she wanted to depart, with no links to the Commonwealth of Nations, she was free to do that, too.

The Labour Party had a safe majority in the House of Commons, and could pass the law freeing India. It is the unwritten law of Britain that the view of the minority shall not be ignored on vital issues, and there were some objections to the government's projected India policy on the part of some die-hard I.C.S. people and devoted bearers of the white man's burden. But the greater part of the minority supported the government's common-sense view by not voting against it.

There remained, however, that perennial problem, the question of the communities. The Congress Party kept insisting that religion was not a compelling secular interest of the citizen of a modern state, but only his private concern. It argued that the Congress Party was never meant to be a receptacle of the Hindu view alone. It not only had Moslem members but also leaders, including Arabian-born Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, now an ex-president of Congress. The Congress leaders reiterated constantly their stand that India's economy was an integrated and natural unit.

Then there was the other perennial problem, the fate of the princely states. What about their treaties with Britain? Were they imbued with Indian nationalism, rendering them pliable and ready to join an Indian nation? Or had Laski been right, and were the pampered princes cursed with feudal minds?

From Ahmadnagar to Raisana Hill

Jawaharlal Nehru was at this time a prisoner in the fort of Ahmadnagar, east of Bombay. Now, suddenly, he was released on higher orders, so as to enable him to participate in the negotiations that were to result in Indian independence. The Attlee government was represented by a cabinet mission in India entrusted with the task of solving the Hindu-Moslem and British India vs. princely India impasses. Working assiduously, with the aid of all strata of Indian political opinion, it produced a government White Paper which concluded that, since India was a natural unit, she should remain united. At the same time, the Moslems should be enabled to group themselves in those regions where they formed majorities, and should be given a large measure of home rule. As to the princely states, the British crown would transfer its paramountcy over them to the government of India.

A wartime hero, Lord Wavell, was the viceroy of India, and it fell to him to appoint an All-Indian Executive Council, which was to serve as an interim caretaker government. It was headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, the former prisoner of Ahmadnagar, who was soon to move to New Delhi's Raisana Hill, the site of the massive Secretariat of the British government.

The Council of St. Pancras Is Surprised

No member of the borough council of St. Pancras had been more conscientious in the discharge of his duties than Krishna Menon. He had attended the meetings regularly, participated in its discussions, and worked hard on the solutions of many problems. And now, suddenly, he dropped out

of sight. Members of the council were to learn that "as Nehru goes, so goes Krishna Menon."

Krishna Menon soon reappeared as a member of the "interim" government, personal representative of Nehru and vice-president of the executive council. Nehru knew the secretary of The India League in London to be an aggressive man, with the right contacts. Soon India would have to establish her diplomatic representation abroad, and Krishna Menon was the right man to do the preparatory work.

The United Nations had come into existence the year before, its headquarters in the United States. Krishna Menon was also a member of India's first independent delegation to the General Assembly of the world body, at Lake Success.

The Moslem League had joined the caretaker government in New Delhi. Did this mean that independence was to find India united after all? Unfortunately for the Congress, that impression turned out to be erroneous. The Moslem League representatives in the executive council were—perhaps not unjustifiably—laboring under the impression that they were "second-string" men, and they felt unhappy. Relations between the Congress Party and the Moslem League became strained. Nehru and Krishna Menon might have ameliorated the situation; they were not practicing Hindus. But Gandhi was, very much so. His was the orthodox way of life, and he appeared now the symbol of Indian independence. The aura surrounding him put Mohammed Ali Jinnah in the shade. The constituent assembly was in the making, to draft India's basic law, but the Moslem League members could not see their way clear to working with the leaders of the Congress Party. The League members decided to relinquish their assembly seats.

Viscount Mountbatten now replaced Lord Wavell as the

occupant of the viceregal palace. The British government made the final commitment of withdrawing from India. His Majesty's government, Mr. Atlee declared, would have preferred to transfer authority into the keeping of one nation, but since this did not appear to be feasible, power was to be transferred to two nations—India and Pakistan. As to the princely states, they were to arrange matters with the two successor states.

Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act. On August 15, 1947, the sovereignty of Britain in India ceased to exist. India and Pakistan were born.

"Mr. Nehru,"—Lord Mountbatten told the man who was now the Prime Minister of India,—"I want you to regard me not as the last viceroy winding up the British *raj* but as the first to lead the way to new India."

The Gods Are Athirst

Before the new countries were established, an awesome occurrence took place. Propelled by one of those unexplained impulses which surge in the hearts of millions of poverty-stricken people who have nothing to lose in their "homes," millions began to move. They left their mud huts or gutters in the alleyways, migrating into India from the region that was to become Pakistan, while other hordes traveled in the opposite direction. If they were Hindus, they feared the Moslem rule; and the Moslems regarded the Hindus with equal dread. Another large religious group, the Sikhs—mainly in the Punjab, which was to be divided by the two countries—was also uprooted.

Never had history seen so vast a migration in so short a time. How many people were on the move nobody knows

—twelve million, perhaps more. Eventually, the survivors became refugees in appallingly crowded slums of indescribable filth.

Even more frightful things occurred during the mass migration. In an elemental outburst of violence, the migrants—Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs—began to slaughter one another. What was the cause of this outbreak? Mass hysteria, probably, induced by uncertainty, despair, fear of one's neighbor, and the ruthless rays of the sun. Nobody was able to count the dead in this holocaust, and the estimates ranged from one hundred thousand to a million. The bloodshed finally ceased from sheer exhaustion.

Could the bloodshed have been avoided? It was the height of the monsoon season, always a nerve-racking period, but this time at its worst, with the streams swollen and transport impeded. Mid-August turned out to be the worst possible date for the transfer. Would the slaughter have occurred under the serene sky of India's late autumn, when nature is at its best? Unfortunately, we shall never know.

The Hour of Decision

The problems of nation-building loomed even larger in the wake of this tragedy. India was now fully independent, and great decisions had to be made. For many generations Britain, the "imperialist," had been India's oppressor. But the generosity of the transfer of power was to wash away the memory of the past. Was India to sever all her relationships with the Commonwealth, or was she to join it?

"Over the past few years Jawaharlal was turning this problem over in his mind"—Frank Moraes, the brilliant Indian newspaperman, and Nehru's biographer, wrote—"and

had discussed it with Krishna Menon, whose opinion on matters political and constitutional, he was beginning to value greatly. . . . He [Menon] had an agile, resourceful mind and an astute understanding, and his value to Nehru lay in his ability to rationalize Jawaharlal's instinctive, often emotional ideas. . . . Menon knew that Nehru had been stirred by Churchill's offer of an Anglo-French Union when France lay mortally stricken. Why could India not remain a member of the Commonwealth on the basis of common citizenship, not Dominion status? It would entail a two-way traffic and ensure reciprocity."

Krishna Menon had considered making Britain his permanent home before heeding Nehru's call to have a hand in the construction of independent India. His peculiar love-hate attitude toward the British inclined him toward the common-citizenship solution. He would have liked to remain both a Britisher and an Indian, if this arrangement of double citizenship could have been worked out.

It could not. Had the plan taken shape, India would have enjoyed a privilege which the other Commonwealth countries—such as Canada—lacked. She would have had priority over all the other members, and this Britain was unable to grant.

What, then, should be India's relation with the United Kingdom? Just everyday relations, with no links to the Commonwealth? Or membership in that organization? Krishna Menon was strongly in favor of the latter. "We join the Commonwealth," Nehru said, "obviously because we think it is beneficial to us and to certain causes in the world that we wish to advance. The other countries of the Commonwealth want us to remain because it is beneficial to them."

And so it was decided.

There were those who wanted to sever all relations with the Commonwealth, the very substance of which seemed to them tainted with imperialism. The most vociferous proponents of the plan to "go it alone" were the Communists, whose arguments impelled Nehru to say that the Indian Communist Party "is the most stupid party among the Communist parties of the world."

What were the advantages of Commonwealth status? There were advantages to joining a world-wide organization, discussing problems of common interest, sometimes even concerting efforts, learning from one another. Commonwealth countries had mutual preferences in trade—lower tariffs or no tariffs, imperial preferences. They might remain members of the "sterling bloc," within which their national currencies were more easily interchangeable. And, of course, Commonwealth status was expected to confer a measure of prestige on new members.

High Commissioner in London

Krishna Menon was appointed the High Commissioner of India to the Court of St. James in London—an ambassadorial rank. Subsequently, he received the additional accreditation of Ambassador to Eire. Thus the agile-minded would-be scholar from the Malabar Coast became His Excellency, the highest diplomatic representative of the world's newest independent country.

Befitting his station, the Indian high commissioner's residence was established in "Millionaires' Row," in Kensington Palace Garden. Befitting the importance of the office, Krishna Menon furnished it lavishly. The high commissioner's office was supplied with all the installations, vehicles, services and

luxuries which, he felt, life on the highest diplomatic level required. Since India had the most varied interests in the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth countries, the government in New Dehli provided a large staff and an adequate budget.

In this vast establishment Krishna Menon set aside two small rooms for himself as his residence. We are told that eighteen hours' work a day was not uncommon for him. He still carried no money in his pocket, and refused to spend any on himself. He barely touched his salary. We are also told that he retained his shabby flat in Camden Town for a time—that flat with all the squawking children, and the shrieking, rumbling trains headed for their nearby terminals.

His ideological hostility toward Britain was—now deprived of a focus—on the wane. "For India independence, for both of us vistas of opportunity and achievement, material and spiritual," he was to say on an anniversary of India's declaration of independence. "In India it has ushered in a great democracy and set her on the road of large-scale economic and social development, both nationally planned and by private initiative. In Britain and India, between our peoples, there have come about, spontaneously and naturally, happy and friendly relations grown out of mutual respect, interest and long association."

As the high commissioner of India in London, Krishna Menon confronted a world of problems. There had been many ties between Britain and India. How were they to be renewed in this new situation? What about the tremendous inventories in the government offices, the British establishments in India, the question of currency and money transfer, of the central bank, credit, of the armed services, of the economic infrastructure . . . and countless other items?

India was now an independent country, but she did not want as a result of freedom to be a bankrupt nation. Britain had large stakes in India. As far back as 1930, India and Ceylon (whose share was slight) had accounted for 14.5 per cent of British long-term overseas investments, as compared with 10 per cent in 1910. The total capital involved was said to be £540 million, a sum larger than the British investment in any other area of the world. According to another estimate, Britain had a full £1 billion invested in India in the early 1930's, or roughly one-fourth of her total overseas investments. During World War II, however, the British financial stake in India had declined largely because the New Delhi government had paid off several hundred million pounds of bonds in British hands. As a result of British war purchases, London owed India over £1 billion. Even so, total British investments in India amounted to the equivalent of \$1 billion at the end of the war, according to a very conservative estimate. It was not in India's interest to have British capital take flight.

British trade was also very important to India. At the time of the outbreak of World War II, the United Kingdom purchased one-third of India's exports, and the rest of the empire 18.1 per cent. As to India's imports, 30.2 per cent came from the United Kingdom, and 26.1 per cent from the rest of the empire. After the cessation of hostilities, many goods which India needed were in short supply; it was a seller's market. Still, Krishna Menon could testify that trade relations had continued without too much change. If he had any complaints, it was against some of his own countrymen, rather than the English. Some Indians were in a frantic hurry to obtain control of foreign interests, and their hurry did not promote the cause of independent India. "Greater coopera-

tion," Krishna Menon said, "might have yielded greater results."

It was while Krishna Menon was high commissioner in London that his country embarked on a significant experiment—its first Five-Year Plan. Its main object was to raise national income and create jobs for millions who were unemployed or underemployed. India's per capita annual national income was one of the lowest in the world, estimated at about fifty dollars, and that took into consideration the vast incomes of the nabobs. The Five-Year Plan was to establish priorities in production, eliminate unnecessary frictions and competition, and obtain the funds from the national treasury which were unobtainable otherwise. Krishna Menon was concerned with the plan peripherally, by way of the cooperation of the British government.

By and large he was doing well in London. But not everything was smooth sailing. For example, there was the famous case of the army jeeps.

His office had entered into a contract to purchase 1,007 army jeeps. The money was paid in advance to a supplying company which was virtually unknown. The jeeps proved to be defective. When the details of the transaction leaked out to the highly critical Indian press, both Krishna Menon and Nehru were attacked with some virulence. An investigating commission was appointed which went into every detail of the case, and was harsh on the Indian high commissioner, charging that the transaction had been poorly handled. The trouble was not his interest in money, but his lack of interest. He had been signally unbusinesslike in this embarrassing case.

Fact and Fancy

His appointment as high commissioner to the United Kingdom and ambassador to Ireland ended in 1952. At this time the standard reference works, such as *Who's Who in America*, which depend for information on the statements of the individuals described, contained the following data: "Practiced at English bar, also Privy Council, returned to bar, 1952; became senior counsel Supreme Court of India, 1953; elected member Council of States (upper house of Indian Parliament), 1953 . . . Visiting professor Osmania University, Hyderabad, India, 1953."

As is so often the case when Krishna Menon describes himself, the words should not be accepted altogether uncritically. Some of the activities mentioned represented a certain amount of wishful thinking. He continued to be eager to be linked to high positions in the realms of law, teaching and government, even though he was active in them peripherally, or not at all. He wanted, one gathers, to keep his "option" on them. A quick look may tell us what these avocations may have meant to him.

The Supreme Court of India does not correspond to the highest federal court in the United States. It corresponds to the House of Lords sitting as a court, which it does very rarely. Its jurisdiction is greatly limited.

The Council of States—sometimes called the Upper House—has something in common with the British House of Lords, but not very much. Its members do not owe their seats to hereditary rights, but are citizens of distinction who air their views on public affairs; this is their major prerogative. The Upper House has the right to submit its recommendations on

legislative work to the Lower House, which in turn has the right to reject the advice.

Osmania University, which, according to the record, claims Krishna Menon as a visiting professor, is a unique school of higher learning in Hyderabad. While the academic language in other schools was English under the British administration, this school, established at the end of the First World War, selected Urdu as its language of instruction, and this in spite of the fact that other tongues were spoken in the surrounding region. Urdu is the most important language of the Moslems in the western sector of Pakistan today. Osmania adopted Hindi as its official language after independence day. Krishna Menon speaks neither Urdu nor Hindi.

. . . *And a Tragic Intermezzo*

The shambling little man with the *dothi* around his middle led an open-air prayer meeting. It was January 30, 1948, and the scent of the powdery dust which the western wind had wafted from the Punjab into Delhi mingled with the crisp air from the North. The little man, Gandhi, told his countrymen that he would fast unto death unless the slaughter between Hindus and Moslems ended.

His efforts to save Moslem lives had incensed some fanatic Hindus. *Mahasabha* was the name of the group to which they belonged. On this day one of its members stole close to the spot where Gandhi was conducting the prayer meeting. The man carried a revolver. Raising it, he uttered a fervent prayer that his bullets might strike their target. He prayed well. He fired three times, and Gandhi collapsed, mortally struck. His last words were "*He Ram*"—Oh, God.

Horror swept the crowd of worshippers, and the entire

world. Sir Stafford Cripps, who had tried his hand at solving India's problems, expressed the view of many men: "I know of no other man of any time . . . who so forcefully and convincingly demonstrated the power of spirit over material things."

And Nehru said: "Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere."

There was indeed darkness everywhere. Gandhi's prestige had held the nation together. What was going to happen now? Here was a nation speaking some 845 languages and dialects, divided into hundreds of airtight caste compartments; hundreds of millions of people with diverse backgrounds; millions of families with their ancient traditions; a nation harassed by famine and plague. Now that the *bapu*, the father, was dead, what was going to happen to the children?

CHAPTER XI

To Dwell Together in Unity

Who Is a Diplomat?

KRISHNA MENON began to attract attention to himself at the seventh session of the U. N. General Assembly, in 1952. Two years later he became the chief delegate of his country to the assembly, a post he held for six years. In 1957 he became India's Minister of Defense, combining that post with his work at the United Nations. Even after 1960 he continued to represent his country at the General Assembly, on particularly important issues.

For the world at large, Krishna Menon will be judged on his record in diplomacy.

What yardstick should one apply to his diplomatic work, or to the work of any diplomat? Are the days past when a diplomat was defined as a gentleman whose job it is to lie for his country? (It was this type of diplomacy which prompted the legendary Prince Talleyrand to exclaim, when hearing about the death of a fellow diplomat, "What could have been his motive?" This was also the diplomacy which utterly con-

founded the contemporaries of Prussia's Bismarck, and earned him the reputation of taking "unfair advantage" of them because, contrary to what was expected of a diplomat, he was telling the truth.)

Diplomacy is no longer considered the art of subterfuge. Today the diplomat forfeits the trust not only of his fellow diplomats but also of his own conationals if he subjects truth to excessive stress. "There is no wisdom like frankness," Britain's Disraeli said, and that axiom applies to diplomats as well.

Dealing with the most sensitive interests of the most sensitive organisms—nations—the diplomat must exhibit the utmost tact. He must display a profound intuitive grasp in dealing with unexpected situations, lest he allow his adversary to seize the initiative. Without appearing submissive or overbearing, he must appear to be in full command of his case. He must avoid distortion—the most dangerous pitfall—in his reports to his foreign office. Precise he must be, but not pedantic, convincing but not dogmatic. His words will carve a deeper groove if he happens to be a master of the felicitous phrase. Even though critical in his approach, he must be constructive in principles and details. Life being the art of constant compromise, and diplomacy being one of the nations' most important instruments for living together in amity, the diplomat must be acquainted with the supreme art of compromise, without forsaking basic principles of national interest and human ethics. Although unyielding as to basic policies, he must be flexible as to means. He must be able to read the minds of many people—above all, the nebulous thoughts that pass for public opinion.

When observing the diplomat at work, the public must bear in mind that the microphone is not his basic tool. Most of his

constructive work takes place *dans les coulisses*, as the French say—behind the scenes, in delegates' lounges and committee meetings, even at the dinner table and cocktail parties. How does Krishna Menon measure up on this yardstick?

Krishna Menon on Turtle Bay

That remarkable architectural phenomenon facing New York's East River, along Turtle Bay, illustrates a sky-scraping aspiration. International organizations are not good incubators of global reputations. Since every nation considers itself the last word, the delegate of each country is invested with the godlike quality of his nation; since he represents a superhuman force endowed with magical powers, the delegate assumes that his utterances represent the ultimate in wisdom. Because of that, he also thinks that his words have the force to sway the world. Since everybody is necessarily the most shining star of the cosmos in the international constellation, nobody can stand out.

The United Nations has been in existence for many years now. What names do the nations remember, except, possibly, those of their own top delegates? Has anybody acquired a reputation there as a constructive world statesman? We do not mean ephemeral headlines. The fact is that—for better or worse—Krishna Menon's name is better known than those of the delegates of most nations.

One of the reasons for this notoriety is that he represents an uncommitted country which also happens to have a tremendously large population. Were he to say yes consistently with one camp, or no with the other, he would attract less attention.

India is uncommitted because she has little of decisive sub-

stance to commit. In our day the only definitive force is the arsenal of nuclear arms, possession of which is limited to a few powers. Commitment on the part of nations lacking these weapons is, therefore, not the expression of any sovereign power. On the contrary, it is a camouflaged form of subordination to the superpowers.

India believes—at least, as her will is interpreted at the present time by Nehru and Krishna Menon—that her policy represents something new in the history of the world. In the past, they would have us believe, there was only the “white club” of Western nations, lined up in recent times in two groups. They do not want war. Nobody in a civilized world can want it. But India’s leaders believe that even the most peace-loving countries may create conditions which might get out of hand at a certain point and inevitably result in a smashup. For fear of being pushed into a corner from which there may be no exit, a challenged power may make countermoves with fatal results.

India believes it is in the interest of the continued existence of civilization that there be a buffer zone: the third powers, the uncommitted nations. They have not even a tiny portion of the physical strength of the big nations, but they do have numbers. These numbers counted for little in the past. Tiny Britain spoke for all of the vast subcontinent of India, as for many other British possessions beyond the seas. But that situation is changed now.

India, being the most populous of these uncommitted countries is sure she has a historic mission to perform. Krishna Menon summed it up in an article for *Envoy*, a magazine which he founded: “The issue which really faces us is whether in this world, the decision of issues by force . . . is permissible

or even possible. There appears to be an increasing awareness, though not agreement, that it is not possible."

As a policy, this is, of course, unexceptionable. How well, how consistently and how disinterestedly it has been applied is another matter.

North Korea Lights the Fuse

In June, 1950, North Korean armed forces surged across the 38th parallel, which the great powers had made the dividing line between North and South Korea. The territory of North Korea was under a Communist regime, that of South Korea under an anti-Communist one. Promptly the United Nations came to the defense of South Korea, whose own soldiers formed the bulk of the army, leavened by American divisions and small units from other U. N. members, with the supreme command in American hands.

India was among the first nations to denounce North Korean aggression. "It is perfectly clear," Prime Minister Nehru declared, "that North Korea launched a full-scale and well-planned invasion and this, in the context of the United Nations Charter, has already been described as aggression by the Security Council." India promptly dispatched an army hospital unit to the fighting front.

The battle lines surged back and forth across the 38th parallel, sweeping all the way up to the northern frontier of Korea, the Yalu River, separating Korea from Communist China. At this point the Chinese Communists entered the war. Now the danger was imminent that the conflict might spread, especially if the United Nations were to bomb Chinese installations.

Eventually it appeared that a truce could be fabricated, if the former frontiers between North and South Korea were

restored. But then a new difficulty arose, and there was the danger that the hopes for a truce might collapse. This time the issue was the question of the repatriation of the prisoners of war held by both sides. The North Korean and Communist Chinese delegates insisted on the mutual return of all prisoners, while the United Nations wanted volunteer repatriation. That would have shown up the unpopularity of the Communist cause, because many of the Communist prisoners did not want to return home.

The Indian compromise resolution was submitted by Krishna Menon. It called for the establishment of a four-nation repatriation commission. After ninety days this commission was to refer prisoners refusing repatriation to a political conference for ultimate disposition. If this conference failed to render a decision after thirty days, these prisoners would be entrusted to the United Nations for disposition. The Communists rejected Krishna Menon's plan. They did not want the rest of the world to know how many of their own soldiers in the hands of the United Nations were refusing repatriation.

Krishna Menon tried again, on June 8, 1953. Now he recommended that a neutral-nations repatriation commission be created, composed of the representatives of Czechoslovakia, Poland, India, Switzerland and Sweden. The Indian member was to serve as chairman. The commission was to have the custody of the war prisoners for a ninety-day explanation period, and then turn over those still unrepatriated to a political conference for thirty days. After that, it would assist any prisoner who wanted to be sent to a neutral country. This recommendation of Krishna Menon's was accepted, and the armistice agreement was signed.

Some critics in the West called Krishna Menon a "formula

manipulator" and said he had deprived the United Nations of an important propaganda victory. But the formula worked, and the Korean war was over. Nearly 1.5 million South Koreans were dead, and the frontier was back virtually where it had been when the war began.

Indochina to the Fore

France, just like the other European colonial powers, lost face during World War II when the Japanese pummeled her into a heap. After the war, she suffered again because she lacked the strength promptly to reoccupy the regions evacuated by the Japanese. Meanwhile, there arose in the Vietnam area of Indochina an indigenous nationalist-Communist movement called *Vietminh* (the abbreviation of the much longer *Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi*, League for the Independence of Vietnam). The head of this movement was a bearded native Communist, Ho Chi-Minh.

The French finally reoccupied Indochina and then hit upon a marvelously poor idea for holding on to it. They installed the former emperor of a part of this region as the head of the state. The man's name was Bao Dai, and the best that can be said of him is that he was unsuccessful. His favorite hangout was the casino in Monte Carlo, and he sought to govern his country from there. It did not work.

The Vietminh hit upon a most effective idea in their fight against the French. They were short of arms, but long on men. So they organized guerrilla forces, small units which burst out of nowhere during the night, achieved their aim—an act of sabotage or an invasion—and with the dawn, faded into the peaceful landscape, stolid peasants tilling their soil. The war went extremely badly for the French.

John Foster Dulles, the U. S. Secretary of State, sought to interest the British in halting the Communists. The risks were great, and the chances of the Vietnam brushfire developing into a cosmic conflagration great. The British excused themselves.

The Vietminh pushed the French forces into a corner in the northeast, the fort of Dienbienphu, where they were overwhelmed after a siege lasting two months. The German mercenaries were good soldiers, and their French officers competent, but they were now completely surrounded, cut off from the rest of the world. On May 7, 1954, they surrendered.

Krishna Menon appeared again offering to solve the Indochina riddle. The decisive conference took place in Geneva. "I am an old fool," Krishna Menon told newspapermen upon arrival in the Swiss city, "here just as a bystander. Of course, if people want to consult me, that would be very nice."

Soon he was closeted with Britain's Anthony Eden, America's Walter Bedell Smith, and Communist China's Chou En-lai, as well as with France's Pierre Mendès-France. His opinion of what the Geneva conference was all about was—if not everyone's view of the real issues—at least characteristic of the way he habitually looks at things. "The whole purpose of the meeting is," he said, "to see the end of imperialism in Indochina."

Again Krishna Menon presented one of his formulas. The main provisions of the agreement recommended by Krishna Menon were: (1) The 17th parallel was to be the cease-fire line in Vietnam, each side being given 300 days for the concentration and withdrawal of troops on its side. (2) Representatives of North and South Vietnam would meet in July, 1955, to arrange for all-Vietnamese elections. (3) Commu-

nist troops and guerrillas would evacuate Laos and Cambodia, where free elections were to be held in 1955.

The problem of Vietnam was solved—temporarily and superficially, at least. Krishna Menon subsequently presided over the New Delhi conference of the International Commission for Control and Supervision, of which India, Canada and Poland were the neutral members.

The Colombo Plan

The Marshall Plan in Europe had provided a pattern. Asian countries also wanted to get together, draw up their “shopping lists” and see what aid they could obtain from the richer nations. Thus came into existence in 1950 the “Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South and South-east Asia.” Krishna Menon had a hand as consultant, adviser and jack-of-all-trades in getting the plan started and moving. India was one of the main signatories of the plan, in the company of Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, Thailand, Indonesia and others. Six “donor” nations assisted them—the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. The plan was to help about a quarter of the total population of the world.

Specifically, the plan’s objective was to have members assist one another, obtaining aid also from the donors for development plans. Members and donors meet annually to discuss projects and exchange information. Technical assistance is the most common type of inter-regional aid. An Indian forestry expert, for instance, may be needed in Ceylon, or Pakistan may wish to have the services of construction engineers for hydroelectric dams. The talents of thousands of people have thus been exchanged, and additional thousands

have been receiving technical training. The donors have provided not only technical skills but also funds running into hundreds of millions of dollars. Operating loosely, the Colombo Plan has made its mark as an imaginative technical-assistance device, a far cry from the colonial exploitation of former times.

The Mountain Air of Bandung

The place was Bandung, in the Republic of Indonesia—the former Netherlands East Indies—encircled by tall mountains with their steplike, terraced fields, in a country of jungles and waterfalls, rising out of the Priangan plateau of the tropical island of Java. The time was the spring of 1955. The attractive mountain town was playing host to the first great Afro-Asian conference. At Bandung were gathered representatives of countries which had had their fights with the “big beasts” of the West but were independent now, and eager to exert greater weight by making their influence felt. The prime ministers of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia formed the sponsoring committee, joined by representatives of twenty-four other nations, extending from the farthest end of Asia to the farthest end of Africa.

Krishna Menon had a hand in the formulation of the final communiqué at the end of the conference. It gave anxious thought to the problem of peace, and expressed concern about the contemporary international tension, rendered more dangerous by the possibility of atomic war. The communiqué warned governments to cooperate in attempts to reduce armaments and place nuclear weapons under controls. It affirmed the resolution of the conferees to retain their right freely to select their political and economic systems, as well as their

own ways of life, in conformity with the principles expressed in the Charter of the United Nations.

The conferees announced a new Afro-Asian Doctrine, which India's spokesmen called *Panch Shila*—the Five Principles. These were non-aggression; non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs; equality; respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; and peaceful coexistence. Commenting on these, the Indian delegation stated:

In the Bandung Declaration we found the full embodiment of these five principles and the addition of elaborations to reinforce them. We have reason to feel happy that this conference was representative of more than half of the population of the world. . . .

Free from mistrust and fear, with trust and good-will toward each other, the nations should practice tolerance, living together in peace with one another as good neighbors, developing amicable cooperation.

Krishna Menon was to quote *Panch Shila*—this somewhat idealistic formulation of what the uncommitted nations stood for—in many of his statements in the tall building facing New York's Turtle Bay. And the contexts in which he invoked *Panch Shila* were to be of a curiously varied sort.

The American Airmen

During the Korean war several American airmen were shot down over Communist China and held as "spies." Officially, the two countries were not at war. The United States was anxious to have the airmen released. Krishna Menon flew to Peking after the Bandung conference and engaged in talks with the Chinese leaders. After he came out of China he announced that at the request of the government of India, the

Chinese would release four American airmen. Subsequently, eleven more were released. A few months later the Chinese announced that they were ready to release several American civilians held prisoners in their country. After leaving Peking, Krishna Menon flew first to London, and then to Washington, where he had a conference with President Eisenhower.

Almost simultaneously, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, also made efforts to have American airmen released. The western press gave him most of the credit, and this infuriated Krishna Menon.

When A. M. Rosenthal, a correspondent of *The New York Times*, asked Krishna Menon a little later why the Indians had not done more to let the world know about their contribution toward the freeing of the foreign prisoners held by the Communists, Krishna Menon answered: "Well, old boy, we are not Americans, you know. We do not have to go around boasting and bragging."

CHAPTER XII

Suez and Hungary

An Explosion and a Failure

"DEPRIVE BRITAIN OF THE SUEZ CANAL," an early-twentieth-century commentator wrote, "and you have an oversized Iceland." The Suez Canal was a main artery within a lifeline encircling the globe and flanked by nodal bases and coaling stations. Sever that lifeline at any vital point, and the British Empire would bleed to death.

Britain controlled the Canal in many ways. She was the protecting power of Egypt and thus occupied the Canal Zone. The government of the United Kingdom controlled 44 per cent of the stock of the Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez, which operated the "ditch." Britain was a signatory of the Constantinople Convention of 1888, under which the Canal was to be kept open to all traffic in peace and war.

In 1952 a military junta staged a coup which ousted Egypt's scapegrace King Farouk and installed a "New Deal" regime which came to be dominated by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser.

It set out to raise the dismally low living standards of the Egyptian *fellabeen*—the peasants living, paradoxically, in one of the world's lushest farm areas, the banks and delta of the Nile. There was only one hitch, and that was an important one: Egypt had experienced a population explosion and her arable area was six million acres for a rapidly growing population of twenty-five millions.

Since the Nile was his country's major resource, Nasser proposed to let the river help in the salvation of Egypt. As things stood, much of the Nile's treasured water was allowed to escape to the sea, to be lost forever. To remedy this was conceived the idea of the Aswan High Dam. About it Nasser has said:

For thousands of years the great pyramids of Egypt were the foremost engineering marvels of the world. They were to insure life after death to the Pharaohs. Tomorrow, the gigantic High Dam, more magnificent and seventeen times greater than the greatest of pyramids, will provide a higher standard of living for Egypt.

This new High Dam—close to the existing lower dam at Aswan—was to be 3 miles wide and 250 feet high, backing up the largest man-made lake in Africa: 250 miles long. The dam was to have 16 turbines to generate nearly two million horsepower of electricity. Also, it was to add two million acres to Egypt's arable land. The first estimate of the Egyptian government was that this vast project would take 15 years to complete and cost \$700 million. The United States, Britain and the World Bank were to help with the financing.

In the autumn of 1955, the Cairo government entered into an agreement with the Soviet bloc to purchase Soviet weapons and admit a number of Soviet technicians into Egypt. This possible evidence of an entente between Cairo and Mos-

cow alarmed Washington. In the early summer of 1956, Washington announced the withdrawal of American aid from the Aswan Dam project.

President Nasser's reaction to the American move was prompt. He announced on July 26, 1956, that the Egyptian government was nationalizing the Suez Canal, and that the profits from its operation would be used to help build the Aswan High Dam.

The nationalization of the Canal affected mainly France and Britain. The English, in particular, reacted to it as the United States might have done if the Panama Canal had been taken over by the Republic of Panama. The French reaction was no less strong. France had special cause to dislike Nasser, whom she accused of stirring up trouble in Algeria. The United States then took the initiative in trying to settle the Suez dispute. And so did Krishna Menon of India.

The principal conference on this problem met in London. Menon attended as the representative of India. From London he returned to New Delhi for conferences with Nehru. From there he flew to Cairo for talks with Nasser. Then again to London, for talks in the Foreign Office. Then Cairo again . . . then London . . . then back to New York for the emergency meeting of the U. N. Security Council . . . then to New Delhi . . . then back to Turtle Bay, this time for the emergency meeting of the General Assembly.

A "users' association" was the proposed solution of the United States. It was supported by Britain, France and the other large users of the Canal. Egypt would be a member of this association, which would take over the prerogatives of the old maritime company and operate the Canal. President Nasser rejected this proposal.

Krishna Menon now came forward with another formula, which he presented on August 21, 1956:

India's aim is to shift the Suez situation from conflict to negotiations. Once they are started we can move to acceptable positions. I feel our plan is negotiable with the Egyptians. We have not advanced these proposals on behalf of Egypt, and we anticipate a great deal of difficulty on it with the Egyptians, but all negotiations are difficult.

India's proposal to the Suez conference in London recommended:

1. The recognition of the Suez Canal as an integral part of Egypt and a waterway of international importance.
2. Free and uninterrupted navigation for all nations in accordance with the Constantinople Convention of 1888.
3. Full recognition of the interests of the users of the Canal.

In line with these proposals, Krishna Menon asked that "consideration be given, without prejudice to European ownership and operation to the association of international user interests with 'The Egyptian Corporation for the Suez Canal,' " and that a "consultative body of user interests be formed on the basis of geographical representation and interests charged with advisory, consultative and liaison functions."

Krishna Menon's proposal was, in effect, to leave the Canal in Egypt's hands and attach to it an advisory body of undefined competence. It immediately was rejected by the western countries. The reaction of the West to Krishna Menon's proposal was reflected in the comments of Anthony Eden, Prime Minister at the time.

"When Egypt first seized the Canal," he wrote, "the Indian government showed some embarrassment, no doubt ac-

centuated by the fact that Mr. Nehru had been a guest of Colonel Nasser in Cairo only a few days before. With the passage of time the Indians embarked actively upon a policy which, they assured us, was an attempt to reach a compromise between two points of view. In effect, their policy meant that Nasser must be appeased. Their representative in Cairo, the aviatory Mr. Krishna Menon, kept in constant touch with the Indian government and freely offered advice to Her Majesty's government. The Indians did not believe in setting up an international authority with more than advisory powers. This would have been entirely ineffective in giving any kind of guaranty to the users of the Canal."

In another context, the British Prime Minister noted:

The Indian government, for instance, were constantly urging a negotiated settlement upon us. . . . Meanwhile, Mr. Krishna Menon made a number of journeys between Cairo, London and, eventually, New York. Her Majesty's government considered at length all suggestions put to them by India, but Delhi did not share our view of the importance of keeping international agreements in the interest of all nations, or of the need to restore them when broken.

And again:

The Indian government were canvassing their scheme, which they now put into writing, for attaching an international advisory body, which would only have vague powers of supervision, to the Egyptian nationalized Canal authority. Mr. Menon had found ears in Cairo ready to listen to such a proposal, naturally enough, for this meant that any effective international cement was eliminated. It might be that the Indians had sincerely convinced themselves that Nasser would not accept the 18-power proposals. Certainly, the Indian government had not supported them, but this did not seem a sufficient reason why all the eighteen powers should, in deference, abandon their position. We had

already considered Mr. Menon's ideas in London and found no substance in them. Thanks to the staunchness of the principal users of the canal, he now failed to sway the deliberations of the Security Council, but his activities still caused a superficial flurry.

War in the Middle East

While these moves were being taken, Egypt was involved in another conflict—this time with Israel. President Nasser, making a strong bid for popularity in the Arab world, had realized that nothing could gain him more adherents than a strong stand against Israel. A harassing guerrilla frontier campaign had been launched against Israel from Egyptian soil. Terrorist commandos, called *fedayeen*, had infiltrated Israel and worked havoc there. Israel had retaliated, sometimes with compound interest. Egypt, Syria and Jordan—Israel's neighbors—had placed their armed forces under the joint command of an Egyptian general. During all this time, the Egyptians had continued to frustrate Israel's attempts to use the Suez Canal for peaceful navigation, and even to gain access to Israel's own seaport of Elath, on the Gulf of Aqaba.

On October 29, 1956, Israel took drastic action to clean out the guerrilla nests in the adjacent parts of Egypt. On that day Israeli troops swept across the Egyptian border into the Sinai Peninsula. They were heading toward the Canal. Again, as eight years before, the overwhelming superiority of Israel was revealed. Egyptian resistance collapsed, and Nasser's troops surrendered by the thousands.

Then, suddenly, the Middle Eastern war took an unexpected turn. On October 30, Britain and France called upon both Egypt and Israel to withdraw their armed forces to positions ten miles east of the Suez Canal. They also called

upon Egypt to place no impediment in the way of the Anglo-French occupation of key Canal points. London and Paris took steps to "safeguard peace." Israel accepted the ultimatum; Egypt rejected it. Thereupon Franco-British air forces started bombing strategic points along the waterway, as well as Cairo and Alexandria airports. Soon they landed their forces at the northern end of the Canal.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union had taken the side of Egypt, announcing that it would send "volunteers" to the fighting front unless aggression was halted. The United States felt that it could not stand aside in this crisis and allow the Soviets to obtain a foothold in a strategic part of the Middle East. The situation was particularly dangerous because a clash between the two superpowers might lead to war.

The United States now moved with great dispatch, this time following the Afro-Asian line. The Afro-Asian group in the General Assembly, of course, called for the immediate withdrawal from Egypt of all Israeli, French and British forces. India, with other nations of the Afro-Asian bloc, sponsored a further resolution in the General Assembly noting with grave concern that Britain, France, and Israel had not yet withdrawn their forces, and urging that they be called upon to do so forthwith. Subsequently India contributed a contingent to the U. N. force in Egypt.

Hungary

Simultaneously with these events, revolution broke out in Hungary. The uprising was against that country's Kremlin-controlled regime and its Soviet masters. It was a popular movement of great momentum, which quickly prevailed over the weak-kneed Communist regime. At that point Soviet

forces entered the land and crushed the revolt with sickening bloodshed.

The U. N. General Assembly was called into action. In a resolution introduced by the United States and approved by fifty nations, the assembly deplored the use of force by the Soviet Union to crush the Hungarian revolt. It asked the Soviet government to withdraw its forces without delay.

Mr. Nehru spoke on the Hungarian issue at New Delhi several times. He somehow found it possible to say that whereas in Egypt "every single thing that had happened was clear as daylight," he could not follow the "very confusing situation" in Hungary. He then proceeded to read the excuses which Marshal Nikolai Bulganin had sent him from Moscow in connection with the Soviet intervention, and which Nehru unblushingly described as "facts."

When the resolution calling upon the Soviets to withdraw from Hungary came up in the General Assembly, Krishna Menon voted against it, maintaining that the United Nations lacked competence in the matter, since it was the internal affair of a country, a "civil conflict." He also appeared on a television program on which he maintained the same stand. The public reaction in the western world was one of outrage, and New Delhi ultimately reversed itself on the resolution. However, its dispatch reached New York after the vote had been taken.

Later, Mr. Nehru tended to link the Hungarian uprising and the Suez incident. "It was a great misfortune," he said in the House of the People in New Delhi "that this [revolution] coincided with the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt because both these things coming together raised the tempo of the world situation and the temperature was high, no doubt. There was great fear in the minds of many people

and governments that war was coming. Because of that, many things were done which, perhaps, normally should not have been done."

But it is clear that, at the time, neither Nehru nor Menon was nearly as concerned with Hungary as they were with Suez. The Suez crisis had, superficially at least, some of the aspects of the kind of colonial struggle with which they were both so familiar. The Hungarian situation, on the other hand, corresponded to none of their mental stereotypes, and failed to evoke a similar emotional reaction. That the Russian intervention in Hungary might be imperialism in a new guise does not seem to have occurred to them—or at any rate, to have interested them.

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CHAPTER XIII

Diplomacy and the Man

"Disarm or Perish"

DELEGATES COME and delegates go, but Krishna Menon remains. He first appeared in the U. N. General Assembly in 1946; then, regularly from 1954 until 1960; and he has filled many special assignments since. No other delegate has lasted as long.

His diplomatic record is long and varied, but two recurrent themes stand out. One—blended of enlightened self-interest and an assertion of India's claim to spiritual leadership—is his intense interest in finding a workable plan for general disarmament. The other, perhaps even closer to his heart, is his preoccupation with destroying the last vestiges of old-style imperialism. Let us examine Krishna Menon's record on these issues.

When he became the Minister of Defense for India in 1957, he continued to be a U. N. delegate and, paradoxically, was his country's chief spokesman for disarmament. This Minister of Defense long had the reputation of being a pacifist—in theory, if not always in practice.

"War itself"—Krishna Menon said in one of his marathon statements to the United Nations—"... is somewhere about 6,000 years old. I do not know why they [the historians] left out the 600,000 years before. There have always been wars since there have been people. . . . But we have at last come to the time when civilized humanity does not regard them as inevitable. . . . Either man will abolish war or war will abolish man. . . ."

His statement to the 1094th meeting of the Committee on Disarmament covers 81 printed pages, which summarize his thoughts on the subject, his criticism of other plans and his penchant for framing proposals. His words contain some theory, some popular history, many presumed witticisms and a lot of sarcasm. Also many shaky sentences and meanderings in dark jungles of verbiage.

Every disarmament plan offered by either side—he quotes a Carnegie Endowment report as saying—contains sets of proposals calculated to have wide popular appeal, and every plan includes at least one feature which the other side could not possibly accept, thus forcing its rejection. The proposer is able to claim that the rejecter is opposed to the idea of disarmament *in toto*. This procedure is known as "disarmament gamesmanship." The Soviet Union is better at it than the United States, Britain or France: it opposes more things.

The ravages of modern war have been discussed in a publication he has read, he says. The authors spoke about megatons of nuclear power—millions of tons. They also spoke about mega-corpses. "Sixty mega-corpses mean sixty million lives. When humanity has reached this point of viewing things then the time had come to call a halt."

Then, there is the "*n*th country problem," a potential way of entry into the nuclear club. "It is regarded as a great dis-

inction to have a little bomb so that one may go about boasting: 'I've also got a bomb.'"

Many proposals to escape the impasse have been made by presumed neutralists, and Krishna Menon has endorsed some of them.

There was the recommendation of Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, to the effect that Africa should be regarded as an atom-free zone (France's nuclear bomb explosions aroused Krishna Menon as they did the Ghanaian head of state). Krishna Menon also endorsed the recommendation of Cambodia's Norodom Sihanouk that a portion of Asia should constitute a zone free from the operations of the cold war. He also welcomed the proposals put forward by the Polish representative with regard to atom-free zones and zones of disarmament.

But a limitation of armaments is not sufficient, Krishna Menon has kept on insisting. "We cannot achieve our goal, we cannot accomplish what is required to guarantee the survival of this world merely by the limitation of armaments. Therefore to us a 'general and complete disarmament' means just what it says. . . . It is insufficient to agree only to partial measures and phases with the final details to be decided after the agreement. . . . My government yields to no one in stating, without any reservations whatsoever, that the implementation of disarmament requires full inspection and control. . . ."

By and large, his stand on this issue coincides with that of the West, and is opposed to that of the Soviet bloc. There is no sense even in planning for such a war, he says, for a World War III. "In the present state of scientific development, the destruction and chaos would be so great within

a few hours that the war could not continue in an organized sense."

And so he has continued probing in the darkest parts of the woods of international life, coming up with "compromise solutions," as, for instance, in the spring of 1962 at the perennial Geneva disarmament conference. Let there be set up in the non-committed countries, he proposed, a chain of detecting stations to monitor tests. The suggestion was brushed aside by the United States and Britain, and the Soviet Union failed even to react.

Later he came up with yet another well-meaning, but even more impractical, new twist on how disarmament could be achieved. The day is not far off, he said, when scientists and not their employers will be held responsible for the production of weapons of destruction. This check should be exercised by "learned societies," concomitantly with the growth of professional ethics. This proposal, too, was almost universally ignored.

In all of Krishna Menon's proposals, and in all the proposals he favors, there appears to be one basic assumption: that the great nuclear powers are incapable of advancing a workable disarmament plan and would be incapable of administering and policing such a plan even if one were found. The only hope lies with a plan originated and administered by one or more of the uncommitted nations.

There are several possible objections to this proposition. If the great powers are reluctant to jeopardize their military security by accepting plans advanced by their opposite numbers, would they really be much more inclined to accept plans advanced by "uncommitted" third parties? Could they trust the third parties to remain uncommitted, if, indeed, they are so now? And could they be sure that the third

parties would be technically capable of exercising the kind of control necessary to make honest disarmament a reality?

Some critics of Krishna Menon's disarmament proposals insist that they are not unmixed with self-interest. The uncommitted nations, and especially India, have long sought to claim a kind of moral leadership in international affairs, to exercise a spiritual balance of power between the West and the Communist bloc. This role of balancer between the Soviets and the West could have considerable practical political advantages, and the administration—or even the formulation—of a workable international disarmament plan could do much to make that role a reality.

But whether or not some self-interest is involved in Krishna Menon's approach to disarmament is rather beside the point. Most people do favor some form of disarmament compatible with their own safety. And in the last analysis there is no reason to doubt Krishna Menon's sincerity when he says: "Either we disarm, or we perish."

"This Is the Forest Primeval"

Few events in Africa's recent history have aroused India's articulate opinion as much as developments in the former Belgian Congo. New Delhi hailed the decision of the Brussels government in the summer of 1960 to give the Congo her independence. And then events began to break.

In preparation for national elections, about 200 political "parties" appeared on the scene. Most of them dropped out of sight promptly, but a score remained. The largest number of seats was gained by the Mouvement National Congolais, headed by a left-wing ex-post office clerk, Patrice Lumumba, who became Prime Minister. The President of the country

was Joseph Kasavubu, head of the Abako party and Lumumba's bitter enemy.

Disorders occurred all over the country. Allegedly, Belgians were attacked, and many of them left Africa in panic. Belgium thereupon decided to fly her own troops into her former colony to protect Belgian nationals. To help restore order, Lumumba asked the United Nations to dispatch military forces. By this time the feud between Lumumba and Kasavubu had assumed the aspect of civil war.

The province of Katanga now proclaimed its secession from the Congo Republic, and its Premier, Moise Tshombe, asked Belgium to send more troops, presumably against Lumumba. Katanga is endowed with rich mineral resources such as cobalt, uranium and diamonds. The Union Minière du Haut-Katanga, a giant in the mining field, had the reputation of having the province in its pocket. Katanga was reputed to pay enough taxes to support the entire Congo.

President Kasavubu gained the upper hand in his struggle with Lumumba and had him arrested. Later Lumumba was found murdered. Matters were further complicated when the commander-in-chief of the new Congolese army, Joseph Mobutu, formerly a sergeant in the Belgian colonial service, seized the initiative and formed the government. His cabinet consisted of fifteen young men, some of them barely literate. The Congolese army became demoralized and unruly; violence and looting were followed by conflicts with the U. N. forces. Not only did Indian troops form a part of the U. N. contingent, but it was an Indian, Rajeshwar Daval, who served as the representative of the United Nations.

Speaking in the United Nations, Krishna Menon charged that Mobutu was a Belgian stooge and that Belgium's withdrawal from the Congo had been a transparent ruse to give

the impression she was withdrawing in good faith, while in reality she was fomenting trouble so as to provide a pretext for her return.

"The members of this Congolese army"—Krishna Menon said—"are gangsters—a gang of murderers who have committed havoc and heaped indignities upon the people. Those among them who are decent should be enlisted in the United Nations force, made to drive trucks and do similar work. The rest of them should be disarmed and confined to barracks."

The province of Katanga charged that the Indians in the Congo were violating the United Nations Charter.

Krishna Menon retorted:

We are not a country that keeps on crying out for the use of force, nor one that tramples the law underfoot. As you are, no doubt, aware, we are proud of our sovereignty, and we shall guard it against all intruders. . . . We are seeking to support measures which could enable this great land of Africa to come into its own, after ages of servitude. It is we, the people of Asia, who are deeply grieved by what is going on here.

The Congo crisis is still far from settled, nor have its issues become less complex. Krishna Menon's attitude toward the situation remains unchanged. First and foremost, he wants the Belgians completely out of the Congo. He persists in believing that the Katangan secessionists are nothing but running dogs of the Belgian imperialists, and for this reason he refuses to regard the struggle between Katanga and the Central Government as an internal affair. The *Panch Shila* doctrine of non-interference does not, therefore, apply. Should the current negotiations between Katanga and the Central Government fail to produce a solution, Krishna Menon would doubtless favor U. N. pressure to force the Katangans to

come to terms. And even such a forced settlement would probably not satisfy him, for he obviously feels that the Central Government is subject to undue pressure from the West.

"Am I Not a Man and a Brother?"

Of particularly great importance to India and Krishna Menon is the Union of South Africa. It was there that Mahatma Gandhi made his name known, fighting discrimination against the sons of India. There are hundreds of thousands of Indians in the Union (which, since having left the Commonwealth of Nations, has changed its name to the Republic of South Africa). The policy of *apartheid*—virtually complete segregation of the races, and the treatment of the dark-skinned majority as subhumans—has riled Krishna Menon, as well as other Indians. Adjacent to the Republic is South-West Africa, a German colony before World War I, a mandate between the two wars, and a presumed trusteeship territory since World War II. However, South Africa has cold-shouldered the United Nations, assuming full administrative power in the southern part (known as the "police zone") and placing the northern section, one of the most primitive regions in the world, out of bounds to whites. When the world body sought to exercise its authority in this region, South Africa walked out. In the face of the inflexible stand of South Africa, the United Nations could not do much except discuss the case and pass resolutions. Krishna Menon played prominent roles in these discussions, addressing the Good Offices Committee on South-West Africa, and also the Trusteeship Committee, in the autumns of 1958 and 1959.

"The whole of this conception [of the sacred trust of the

guiding powers],” he said, “stands convicted today in the name of the people of South-West Africa. [The Union] stands convicted in the name of what we call the Declaration of Human Rights. And we are asked to hand over these people to a country which has practised *apartheid* and glorifies it; which tells the world without shame that this is the pattern you should follow in order to solve the racial problems of the world. . . .”

Then, with tongue in cheek:

To South Africa we owe a great debt of gratitude because it nourished the great *Gandhiji* in his earlier days and gave him the field—it did not give him, he found it—for his experiments, and for the development of that great personality that brought about the liberation of our country and gave the world the gospel of reconciliation and the resolution of conflicts through non-violent means.

“Infinite Wrath and Infinite Despair”

Few international problems of modern times appeared to be as hopeless of solution as that of the sun-drenched island of Cyprus, in the eastern Mediterranean, almost within sight of the Arabs’ Levantine coast. Proudly, the majority of the islanders proclaimed themselves Greeks, while, no less proudly, a minority of about one-fifth of them called themselves Turks. And Greeks and Turks, as all the world knows, have been traditional foes.

The Turks took the Greek-speaking island centuries ago and held it until it passed to the British crown at the end of the last century. The British turned it into one of the bulwarks along their imperial lifeline.

As the “nationality revolution” swept the world, the Greek

inhabitants of Cyprus clamored for *enosis*, union with Greece. The Turkish inhabitants, on the other hand, dreaded such a union. They wanted British rule to continue, seeing the English as umpires and the pillars of the island's laws. Failing the maintenance of the status quo, they favored *taksim*, a separate entity for their Turkish institutions. As neighbors' hands were raised against neighbors, violence erupted on the island.

On several occasions Krishna Menon addressed himself to this question, most significantly on December 2, 1958, before the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. His stand was directed against *enosis* and also against *taksim*. He must have had the sorry spectacle of the division of the Indian subcontinent in mind. He emphasized the point that the British and French got along together in Canada, and he saw no reason why their example should not be applied to Cyprus. He favored independence for the island, with special arrangements providing satisfaction for the desires of the Turkish minority. Much blood was shed on the island before the final solution was reached. Krishna Menon's recommendation was shared by other United Nations members, and that was the solution the parties to the dispute adopted.

Les Pieds Noirs

The United Nations tackled the problem of Algeria many times, and so did Krishna Menon, speaking on behalf of India. Here was a large North African land, on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, right across from France. Nineteenth of its people were Moslems who wanted to have a free Algeria. The rest were non-Moslems, who proudly

called themselves *pieds noirs*—black feet—because of the soil they tilled. Many of these wanted *Algérie française*. Some of them were rich landowners, *colons*, who had much at stake.

The Algerian Moslem elite had acquired its way of life from France. Part of this way of life was the full development of one's gifts—a part the Moslems now claimed for themselves. "Backward" peoples nearly everywhere had gained their freedom, and the Algerians, exposed to the influence of the West, saw no reason why they should be deprived of what many of them considered their birthright. The two sides came to grips in one of the bloodiest conflicts in recent history. It claimed hundreds of thousands of victims, the majority of them Moslems. It was a bitter war of attrition. The French had the superior arms and armies; the native Moslems, the topographical advantage and a tearing resentment. They developed the guerrilla tactics which the Vietnamese had tried with success—fighting at night, and then fading into the daylight as peaceful peasants attending to their serene occupations.

This was typically the kind of situation which aroused Krishna Menon to make slashing attacks on "imperialism":

I want to say without any reservation, that the imperialist and non-imperialist countries which are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization must have the blood of the Algerian people on their consciences because it is NATO, its vast moral and material resources made available to France—as indeed to Belgium, Portugal and other countries—which is responsible for the colonial exploitation of Africa and Asia at the same time. The time has come to mince no words in this matter. While registering its objections to military blocs, my country has at all times kept away from detailed criticism of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. . . . But now the position is such that the arms, the

airplanes, the bombs and the moral support of NATO enable France to suppress the Algerian people. . . .

This equation of NATO with imperialism struck a good many Western observers as unfair, but it was neither untypical nor entirely unexpected.

The eventual liberation of Algeria must have been a source of immense gratification to Krishna Menon. One more bitter struggle with imperialism had been successfully concluded. And the preceding few years had seen the liberation of a host of former African colonies. Immense strides had been made in the realization of the spirit of Bandung.

It was doubly ironic, therefore, that well before the liberation of Algeria, India herself had several times been accused of imperialistic behavior. One such instance was the case of Kashmir.

CHAPTER XIV

In the Vale of Conflicts—Kashmir

"Darker Grows the Valley"

LEANING AGAINST the tallest mountains in the world, the cloud-piercing dorsal column of Asia, the very name of Kashmir exudes the fragrance of grass-carpeted, flower-strewn beauty. Besides being beautiful, it is also saturated with conflicts. It was not just one of the hundreds of princely states when independence came, but the largest of them—larger, indeed, than many European nations. Also, it was adjacent to both India and Pakistan, the neighbor of China and Afghanistan, a few miles from the Soviet Union. The vast majority of the population was Moslem, while the ruler was a Hindu.

Maharajah Sir Hari Singh had been at the helm of Kashmir for twenty-two years. At the time of the creation of independent India and Pakistan, he was neither particularly competent nor popular, as a Hindu master of a Moslem people. His country was not imbedded in either of the successor states, thereby necessitating his adhesion to one or the other. Kashmir was "out of this world," and he thought he could retain the throne of his country because of its location.

Then events began to break—nobody knows precisely how. One version says that the Dogras, one of the “martial” Hindu groups in the valley, began to pounce upon the Moslems, and that, hearing of this, Moslem tribesmen started to stream across the passes from Pakistan, encouraged by their government. These Moslems launched a *jihad* (holy war) against the Hindus. Another version is that Moslem tribesmen, unprovoked but abetted by Pakistan, streamed into the State in the name of Islamic brotherhood. This is what Robert Trumbull, correspondent of *The New York Times*, wrote (in his book *As I See India*):

The Pakistan government has steadfastly denied any official encouragement to the tribes in the invasion of Kashmir. . . . But there never was any doubt that Pakistani provincial authorities, perhaps unofficially, but certainly not without the knowledge of Karachi, supplied the bloodthirsty tribal 'lashkers, (war parties), with truck transport. And Pakistani officers, alleged to be 'on leave,' led the contingents. . . .

The maharajah realized that if he were to hold out any longer he would be swamped by the Moslems, whom he—a Hindu—detested and feared. There was only one move he could make, and that he did. In accordance with the prevailing agreement on accession, on October 26, 1947, he acceded to India. Thereupon the Indian government started dispatching troops to Kashmir to halt the Pakistani invasion. Since there were no permanent, all-weather roads between India and Kashmir in those days, the troops were sent in by airdrops. The Indians arrived just in time to halt the Moslems some miles outside of Srinagar, the capital, in the Vale of Kashmir. The more mountainous, western, part of the state remained in Moslem hands.

At that point Hari Singh dropped out of the picture, ab-

dicating in favor of his son, Yuvray Karan Singh. The father became an emigré in Bombay, where he died several years later. Renouncing the title of maharajah under New Delhi's prodding, the son retained a part of the privy purse, and for a time, the empty title of *Sadr-I Riyasat*, Head of State. About one-fourth of the population of Kashmir remained in *Azad* (Free) Kashmir, under Sardar Mohammed Ibrahim, who wanted the region to be united with Pakistan.

If India had let matters rest at that point she would have had a stronger claim on Kashmir, but instead she lodged a complaint against Pakistan with the U. N. Security Council. It recommended the appointment of a commission of five who would supervise the withdrawal of the invading tribesmen, after which the Indian government would be called upon to reduce her army of occupation. Then machinery would be set up to conduct a plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations. The resolution was first adopted in 1949 and reiterated several times.

But then India claimed that since Pakistan had failed to withdraw her troops, the plebiscite was out of order. She unilaterally incorporated Kashmir into India in 1957. She argued that a plebiscite was now no longer necessary, because three elections had been held in the territory and these were equivalent to plebiscites.

Early in May, 1962, Pakistan presented her case anew to the United Nations. Her delegate, Mohammed Zafrulla Khan, urged that India allow a plebiscite to ascertain the people's will. He suggested, too, that the president of the Security Council approach the two nations involved in the controversy via informal conferences, so as to find a way to end the old dispute. Pakistan was ready to accept arbitration by any "recognized international figure of undoubted integrity," he

said. Also, his country was willing to accept any procedure to determine what was holding up progress toward disarmament. If any faults were found, she would seek to remedy them.

An Afternoon at the Security Council

"Kashmir is a situation," Krishna Menon said before leaving New Delhi for the U. N. Security Council meeting. "It is not a dispute."

He was Minister of Defense of India, also the specialist on the Kashmir "situation." Although not the regular delegate, he was to present India's side of the problem.

Let us observe him on May 2, 1962, in the Security Council chamber on Turtle Bay. It should help us to see how he works in the international body—his line of thought, his debating technique and, perhaps, his standing in the international community.

The meeting to hear Krishna Menon, the delegate of India, on the question of Kashmir was called for three o'clock. Well past the appointed hour, the delegates began to drift in, forming small clusters, engaging in small talk, big talk, perhaps also frivolities. They were taking their places at the semicircular horseshoe table—the "permanents," the U.S., U.K., U.S.S.R., France and Nationalist China. And the "non-permanents": Chile, Ghana, Ireland, Rumania, the United Arab Republic and Venezuela. In about thirty minutes the eleven members were in their seats.

Krishna Menon was sitting near the door, to the right of the presiding officer. Mohammed Zafrulla Khan, a striking bearded figure, was facing the president in a center seat. Krishna Menon was accompanied by six aides, youngish men,

one of them a Keralan like himself, the others looking like North Indians. They had come from India for this session, and would return as soon as it was over. The photographers' lenses were focused on Krishna Menon, the best known man on the floor, with the exception of the American delegate, Adlai E. Stevenson.

The chairman invited the delegates of India and Pakistan to take their places at the ends of the table, facing each other. This was this particular chairman's first appearance during the month, his turn to preside in the rotational setup of the "Great Powers." He was a Nationalist Chinese. He began the proceedings by thanking the delegate of Chile, his predecessor in the chairman's seat the month before, for his "constructive" handling of the business of the Security Council. The delegate from Chile asked for the floor, and modestly disclaimed any special merit, thanking the chairman for thanking him.

Then Zafrulla Khan asked to be heard so as to explain a procedural misunderstanding, which he did, consuming half an hour. Then it was Krishna Menon's turn to present India's case. He started off by saying that his "submission" might take four hours. This announcement was received with a stifled sigh of resignation.

He began with the third century before Christ, weaving a flimsy history of Kashmir, then skipping quickly and lightly to the days of the British Raj. The theory had been advanced, he said, that Kashmir should be tied to Pakistan, because most of her people were Moslems. But "in our country and in any civilized nation it is not religion that qualifies people for citizenship." On that issue India could stand her ground. She was the third largest Moslem state in the world, after Pakistan and Indonesia. India was the home of some sixty million Moslems, "as patriotic as the followers of any other

creed. . . ." The Maharajah of Kashmir had acceded to India at the proper time. Had he acceded to Pakistan, India would not have demurred, said Krishna Menon.

A United Nations commission had established the fact, he asserted, that aggression existed in Kashmir. And now Zafrulla Khan offered no proof of any threats from India, nor had Indian sovereignty been questioned by the United Nations. That sovereignty flowed originally from the act of accession, and now from the fact that India was one indivisible unit, which could not tolerate an act of aggression, be it by Pakistan or China. An act of this type "eats into our vitals, it is something that disregards our national integrity and sits on our economic development and leads to instability and unsettlement on our continent."

There had never been any commitment on the part of India to conduct a plebiscite, he said. And what was a plebiscite, anyway? It was voting, linked to democratic, parliamentary institutions. But Pakistan herself had neither democracy nor a popularly chosen parliament. And now, a country which had had no popular elections for fifteen years insisted that India, which had had several national elections, should submit to a plebiscite.

Moreover, he charged, Pakistan was backing acts of sabotage and assassination against India. The Republic of India was not going to take the initiative in a war. But if it were attacked, it was going to defend itself. He finished his peroration with a melodramatic flourish.

The delegation of Pakistan issued a quiet statement in rebuttal: "Pakistan claims no special privileges for herself. But she does claim the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir. When India denies that right, as she stubbornly does, she assumes the classic colonialist position."

Simultaneously, Prime Minister Nehru charged in the New Delhi Council of States that Pakistan was recruiting tribesmen for a possible invasion of Kashmir. Such an invasion would mean an "all-out war."

The Security Council met several weeks later. Several members submitted a resolution suggesting that India and Pakistan confer on this problem. India asserted that there was nothing on which to confer, and the Soviet Union helpfully vetoed the resolution. This was the hundredth Soviet veto.

"In All Humility"

Let us observe Krishna Menon's technique while facing the Security Council. He was holding a script, which apparently provided him with his cues. On occasion, a point would catch his fancy, and then he would elaborate on it, making long detours. Then again, an idea would strike him as funny. He would grin, erupting into extemporaneous humor which, inevitably, failed to transmit itself to the other delegates. Some of them would appear resigned, while others looked grim. A fighter, he would make another try, and get the same reaction. The third try would trail off into an unfinished sentence.

His discursive methods were not always easy to follow. He would launch an argument and then drop it, in favor of what must have impressed him as a better one. He was roaming over a large field, unfinished thoughts lying all over the landscape, like so many victims of a war of arguments. Whatever initial unity his address may have possessed was disrupted by his incessant detours.

Now and again he would ask an aide to hand him a document. He would read a passage, suddenly ending with "enough

of this," then turn to another point, without weaving the two into any common network.

He spoke in a clear and ringing voice, not too loud, nor too soft, slurring his *r*'s, uttering slightly sibilant *s*'s. He emphasized his points with expressive gestures, waving his mobile hands, touching his nose, scratching his neck, wagging an admonishing finger. Several times he employed his favorite expression—"in all humility"—but there was no humility in what he said.

The simultaneous translators attempted to keep up, but nevertheless fell behind, surrendering at times, leaving great gaps, then rushing back in canter, to be swept overboard again by the deluge of his words.

"I'll return to this point later," and again one could sense the flutter of resignation.

And the substance of the presentation? India's case, of course, omitting the qualifying clauses, was a lawyer's brief sprinkled with pettifogging. The arguments could not have stood up in any court of law. If the United Nations had been a judicial forum, the advocate of the opponent would have had a field day.

Initially India's case had been fairly good. She had gotten the adhesion of the generally recognized head of the Kashmirian state. There had been some kind of invasion from Pakistan.

Legally, however, India had exposed herself to U. N. regulation by submitting the case of Kashmir. This submission altered India's legal status, a fact that not even the world's best lawyer could have changed. There was nothing else for the Indian delegate but to resort to pettifogging devices if he was to speak on the issue at all. Perhaps he was hoping the other delegates would be impressed. They were not.

Bleary-eyed, Ambassador Stevenson was floored by a spasm of yawning, which he made no attempt to restrain. He had heard all of these arguments before, and he was no child to believe them. Several other delegates were dozing off, stirring awake with a sense of guilt, trying to compensate for their lassitude by rustling papers on their desks, doing many things—but not listening.

There were people from India in the audience, many of them young. They were the ones who were hanging on Krishna Menon's words. As he raised his voice in the final peroration, the young people's eyes were aflame. Yes, one could almost hear their brains thinking, India will defend herself.

This was something new for India to hear: the voicing of their ability to stand up to the world, to utter a defiance. They did not notice Krishna Menon's repetitive utterances, the chilly atmosphere, the abortive humor, the poor sentence structure and the weakness of the argument. The address was poor according to the laws of rhetoric, and perhaps more so according to the rules of common sense. But it was rich in content for the audience for which it was intended: the millions at home, whose pulses it set racing when they heard about it in the next few days. They were proud of having their ringing voice heard, the voice of one of the poorest nations sounding out in the richest city in human history. When Krishna Menon returned to New Delhi he was accorded a warm reception.

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CHAPTER XV

China and India

The Chinese Dragon

INDIA WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY, after the Soviet Union, to recognize Communist China. Krishna Menon never neglected to consider China's possible interests in his negotiations about Korea and Indochina. Yet China has not been a friendly neighbor. The two countries are contiguous over a frontier of some twenty-four hundred miles. The border is formed by the tallest and most rugged of mountain chains—the Karakorum and the Himalayas. The Namcha Barwa peak (25,445 feet) is the eastern anchor of the border; the western anchor is the Godwin Austen (28,250 feet). In between is 29,028-foot Mount Everest. India and China meet in the land of what the British called the "criminal tribes" of Assam State, the North-east Frontier Agency—NEFA—while in the west it is Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir which are contiguous with China. India is responsible for the defense of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan, the three Himalayan countries.

India and China have for the last several years engaged in

bitter arguments about their common frontiers. The conflict arises from the fact that the border has never been properly surveyed. The British got together with the Chinese and Tibetans on this issue just before World War I. Britain, speaking for India, was represented by Sir Arthur Henry MacMahon, foreign secretary to the government of India; Tibet was represented by her premier, and China by a plenipotentiary. The approximate frontier was finally decided upon at the hill station of Simla. Because of the place, Indian history speaks of the Simla Convention, and in honor of Sir Arthur, the frontier is known as the MacMahon Line.

The might of the British in India had been reflected in the fact that whenever there were border disputes with the neighbors—Afghanistan or China—India had got the bigger pieces. Now the British were gone but the frontiers remained. For several years the Chinese lay low, but then, in 1959, they began to stir, claiming large slices of land from India, and moving their border posts into the neighbor's land. This would have been understandable if the soil had been good in the coveted areas. But what could the Chinese, or anybody else, do with some of the world's most inaccessible mountains? We shall try to see. But first the controversy.

First, the Chinese sliced off some four thousand square miles of Bhutan, on the ground that the British had had no claim to that region. Anyway, the British were out, and so the land should revert to China. Nehru and Krishna Menon showed the Chinese the authentic map, but it made no impression on Peking. At the other end of India, the Chinese handled their neighbor even more roughly. Claiming some fifty thousand square miles from India, they actually occupied, at first, regions estimated at from twelve to fourteen thousand. They overwhelmed a mountain post, killing sev-

eral Indian frontier guards. Krishna Menon and Nehru had a lot to answer for in the *Lok Sabha* (House of the People), the Indian legislature. Why had they let the Chinese have their way? Even the progovernment papers were incensed.

Krishna Menon had failed also to object to China's brutal conquest of Tibet, refusing to vote in favor of the United Nations resolution condemning the Chinese action. "What is the purpose of the debate?" Krishna Menon asked. "It does not help the Tibetans at all." He downgraded the importance of the Chinese incursions, airily calling them "momentary aberrations" and speaking of "mountaintops where not a blade of grass grows." "Appeasement," shouted the press.

Whether appeasement or not, it encouraged the Chinese to be still more aggressive. Peking concluded a road-building pact with Nepal, and offered economic aid to Sikkim and Bhutan. "A stab in the back," Krishna Menon was reported to have exclaimed privately when he heard about this. Was this going to be a Chinese pincer movement directed at India? But Menon went no further than mildly to counsel the Chinese to withdraw from Indian land in the "interest of socialism and peace."

"Menon claims with some justice," observed *Time*, "that India could not win a war with Red China, though it is a curious stance for a vain Defense Minister. But Menon's critics counter that defending Indian territory against further Red conquests need not lead to war."

The trouble seems to be that Krishna Menon had neglected to build up India's border defenses.

"While he and Nehru refuse," continued *Time*, "to give details to parliament on the ground that such information would be useful to the Chinese, one fact is clear: North India's population centers are far closer than Red China's big

cities, but the Chinese have built more roads to the Himalayan passes than the Indians. Most frontier posts can be reached from the Indian side only by mulepack or helicopter. India's defensive position would be far better if it were to make common cause with Pakistan, but Krishna Menon sneers at the suggestion."

The Indian-Chinese frontier issue was precarious, and getting more complex every day. In the early spring of 1962 the government of India stated in a note to Peking that only the "peaceful withdrawal of the Chinese forces from the territories which have traditionally been a part of India, can create the atmosphere for a peaceful settlement of the border dispute."

Peking charged, in turn, that since 1961, Indian military forces had advanced into Chinese territory and set up posts, and Indian aircraft had "wantonly made reconnaissance and harassment flights over places where Chinese frontier guards are stationed and even over places far in the rear." A statement by a Foreign Office spokesman in Peking said that the borders between the two countries set out on the Chinese maps had a "historical and factual basis," while "India used material reflecting British aggression against China in the past to justify its stand."

Then Krishna Menon, again in Madras, on April 20, 1962, declared that he would not be a party to any step "which will expose our troops to unnecessary jeopardy . . . China cannot swallow us up any more than we can swallow up China . . . No monopolist newspaper is going to jockey us into a position where we have to defend ourselves from a position of weakness."

Apparently he seems to have felt that blame for the deterioration of the border situation lay less with Chinese expan-

sionism or with his own incompetence as Defense Minister than with the sinister machinations of unnamed foreign monopolists.

Why the Quarrel?

Why this quarrel with a country which had sought to maintain amicable relations with China? China had launched a massive socio-economic movement to leap from the seventeenth into the twenty-first century. The Chinese leaders hoped that by creating a mood of national exaltation combined with totalitarian controls they would be able to set up an effective organization to accomplish their aim. India has been trying to do the same thing by democratic means, through a freely elected parliament with its will implemented by a government responsible to the legislature.

The famished masses of the economically backward countries have been watching this race. Whichever of these countries wins will gain more than a more rapid increase in living standards. It may appear to be in China's interest to place all kinds of obstacles in India's way, thereby frustrating her efforts to be the first to "cut the tape."

Related to this mode of thinking is another. The Chinese Communist regime has not been doing well of late. Having tried to grab much, it has got little. The most convenient device available to an autocracy in such a case is to divert attention from its failings by arousing public sentiment, by concentrating on an antagonist. "People are better at hating than loving." Nothing is easier than to stir up a hate campaign. Such appeals help people forget short rations, even though they fail to still hunger pangs. In a highly unconventional setting, the Chinese gamble in the Himalayas followed a conventional pattern.

It is not clear whether Krishna Menon sees this explanation of China's motives. If he does, he almost certainly does not agree with it. But whatever his real attitude may be, he cannot wholly ignore the grim facts. The border dispute is real, and it is serious. India has been obliged to strengthen her frontier garrisons and has built thousands of miles of new military roads in the threatened areas. There is, after all, a limit to how far even Messrs. Nehru and Menon can be pushed.

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CHAPTER XVI

In the Defense Ministry

On Raisana Hill

A FLUTTER OF EXCITEMENT swept the editorial offices of the Indian press when the composition of the new government was announced after the general election of March, 1957. It mostly concerned the appointment of the new Minister of Defense.

Officially, ministerial appointments in India are made by the President of the Republic, on the advice of the Prime Minister. The President was Rajendra Prasad; the Prime Minister, Nehru, who also filled the post of minister of external affairs, and of the head of the department of atomic energy.

Ministers in India are collectively responsible to the *Lok Sabha*. Again the Congress Party had cleared the electoral hurdle with flying colors. But Krishna Menon himself was not popular in his party, nor in the legislature. Was he popular with the President? It made little difference, because the latter's functions were representative only. Real power rested

in the P.M.'s hands, and it was he who wanted Krishna Menon next to him in the defense post.

The Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Defense are in the South Bloc of the vast complex of buildings the British built on Raisana Hill. This is the Secretariat, facing a magnificent vista between two New Delhi memorials and suggesting the vastness of the country. The South Bloc is India's nerve center.

If Panditji wanted Krishna Menon for the post in the Ministry of Defense, he had more than enough power to gratify his wish.

A Man to Power Born

The position of Panditji in India appears at first glance to be an enigma. How is it that he concentrates such vast power in his hands when India is a democracy? It is explained in his public appearances. Let us observe him when he is addressing a vast gathering. Gatherings in India—a country which will soon have half a billion people—are inevitably vast.

He does not speak all the languages of the audience. Nobody could—there are so many of them. He speaks English—the Cambridge variety—which sounds as if it were his native tongue. Enthralled at his feet sits his audience—most of it not understanding a word he says. He completes his peroration, and pandemonium breaks loose. It would have made no difference if he had recited the alphabet.

Members of all castes seem to worship this Kashmirian Brahman, the most thoroughbred of all Indian aristocrats. This philosopher-statesman, a superintellectual, is the god of the illiterate millions who do not know where their next meal will come from. What appeals to them? Evidently that sign on his forehead appeals to them—the sign of the charismatic

leader. Yet he does not act the part. He looks and acts more like a college professor than the anointed of the gods.

Many people say that the mantle of India's protective divinity—Gandhiji—has fallen on his shoulders. While this is true, the explanation is not sufficient. Nor is it sufficient to say that he is a man of great intelligence and deep, abiding intuitions. He is also a politician, a master of his craft. He manipulates people, divides and rules over them, and—more often than not—keeps them away from the limelight so as to have a monopoly. In Krishna Menon he beheld another master manipulator, who was nevertheless beholden to him. And so Panditji installed Krishna Menon on Raisana Hill.

Krishna Menon has been talking for years about the futility of wars. Although associations are not conclusive evidences of his ideology, he has always preferred the kind of pacifism represented by Bertrand Russell. Is the Ministry of Defense of a young country beset by problems the right place for a pacifist intellectual? Is it the proper place for a man who was hesitating what road to take—the one leading to law or the other one leading to teaching? Generals have sensitive souls which are easily bruised. Krishna Menon had the reputation of being brutally outspoken. How could he get along with top brass?

At the time of Krishna Menon's appointment to his post India's second Five-Year Plan had run into a snag. Independence was already a decade old, and yet the people's living standards were disastrously low. It is true that standards were rising almost imperceptibly, but that was precisely the danger. Soon the critical threshold of the "disappointment explosion" might be reached. The revolutionary masses are not the poorest people. Those are too apathetic and weak to act. They

are the people who have seen the dawn and want to see the sun.

The Asian scene was astir with unfulfilled expectations. As democratic procedures were suspended, India's next-door neighbors, Pakistan and Burma, turned for salvation to military leaders. Thailand, another nearby country, was already under a tight military rule. All over Indonesia, disgruntled officers of the armed forces were spark-plugging revolts. Indochina—South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia—were engulfed in chaos. Farther afield, in the Middle East, military regimes sprang into life. Did all these developments conform to a pattern? There were no signs of such upheavals in India, to be sure, but these were not times when anything could be taken for granted. Is it possible that Nehru picked Krishna Menon for the defense post because he was the man who could face down even the most arrogant man of war?

Other thoughts may have been stirring in Panditji's mind. Free from the shackles of Britain, India was still exposed to the annoyance of Portugal, the dwarf. That Iberian country had a small enclave in India, not far north of Krishna Menon's place of birth. This was Goa, and its very name was an insult. Was Krishna Menon the man to "decontaminate" India by eliminating the "festering sore"? Or perhaps Panditji had other jobs in store for his neighbor on Raisana Hill. Before answering these questions let us look at India's imperial heritage.

"Arms Against a Sea of Troubles"

India took over the armed forces from the British. What had the British Raj thought of the martial qualities of Mother India's sons?

At first the British had been very critical, saying, in their

outspoken way, that "in the immense population of India the number of men of martial proclivities and even of personal courage is a very small proportion of the whole, and the great mass of people, educated or otherwise, are quite devoid of any martial potentiality."

When the commander-in-chief in India at the beginning of this century, the legendary Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, helped to establish military units of "martial classes and races" he employed them so as to supplement each other's qualities, producing what he called a healthy rivalry, while the "less warlike races" were to be eliminated from the military ranks. The most highly valued members of the fighting races were the Sikhs of the Punjab and the Gurkhas of Nepal.

The more important Indian native states had, under British rule, their own armed forces. They were integrated into the Indian imperial service troops, under British control. Responsive to Indian susceptibilities, the designation "imperial" was later replaced by "state troops." Large numbers of Indian troops were dispatched to the West during World War I. They were sent to France and to such other critical areas as Mesopotamia and Palestine. Under Lord Allenby Indians fought the Turks. The war record of the Indians, and not only that of the "martial classes," was excellent. And it was perhaps even better in World War II.

The division of the subcontinent into two countries brought numerous problems in its wake. Some of the so-called martial races were now settled in Pakistan. How were the military, naval and air force stores to be divided? How was India to recruit a new officer class? How were the funds for the armed forces to be acquired?

The foundations of the armed forces were good. The officer class, inherited from the British, had a thorough training,

including Sandhurst. Not only the British officers' swagger sticks were retained, but also their proud *esprit de corps*. While army service was voluntary, there was no shortage of volunteers. Soldiers wore snappy uniforms, and their food was good.

The armed forces Krishna Menon took over consisted of the regular army, navy and air force, plus the territorial army—a reserve force—and the *Lok Sahayak Sena*, the national volunteer force; the national cadet corps; and an auxiliary cadet corps. The Indian fleet was small: two cruisers, one aircraft carrier and a number of destroyers, minesweepers and auxiliary boats. The three major air force commands—operational, training and maintenance—were located at Palam (New Delhi), Bungalore and Kanpur.

Krishna Menon effected numerous changes in the organization and administration of the Ministry of Defense. He inaugurated the National Defense College (patterned on Britain's Imperial Defense College) for the training of the senior officers of all three branches. Its main purpose was the study of the military, scientific, industrial, social, economic and political factors involved in war, as well as the higher direction and strategy of war. The Defense College was also designed to afford opportunities to senior officers and highly placed civil servants to get together for the exchange of ideas, thus giving them a better understanding of each other's problems in war and peace.

Krishna Menon—the ex-schoolmaster—established a new engineering college for the training of junior specialist officers in the services. The school of electrical engineering of the navy at Jamnagar was charged with the task of training officers and men in that branch of the services. Account was

taken of the fact that most of the newly acquired ships were being fitted with sophisticated electrical equipment.

As early as 1958, Krishna Menon launched the research and development organization of his services. He accomplished this through the fusion of the Technical Development Establishments and the Defense Science Organization. The stated objective of the new body was to promote and apply scientific research for production.

Only the army had ordnance factories before Krishna Menon took over the Ministry. He established "producing stores" for the navy and the air force as well, to turn out artillery, heavy mortars, naval guns and barrels, recoil systems for guns, mountings, carriages and buffers for heavy and medium caliber guns, small arms, bombs, shells and various other types of ammunition, naval mines, high explosives, depth charges, parachutes and mountain warfare equipment.

It was he who inaugurated the auxiliary cadet corps, to train his country's youth in team spirit and discipline combined with patriotism. It had enrolled more than a million by 1960. The regular Cadet Corps membership doubled to 263,469 in the first four years of his incumbency. The technical unit cadets were offered specialized training in flying. Gliding was also introduced as a part of the air cadet's training.

He fostered a Welfare Organization in the Ministry of Defense, with the aid of welfare officers. They helped arrange cultural festivals, and produced plays. Calling for the development of social consciousness, he has helped to encourage sports. "You can't remove slums by removing brick-and-mortar structures," he said. "You must develop an anti-slum mentality." He also had the armed forces' pension rates increased.

The expansion of the regular and ancillary services was

indicated by the increase of the defense budget from a little over two billion rupees in fiscal 1956-57 to more than three billion five years later.

A Controversial Man

Yet Krishna Menon has managed to be in the center of several controversies and growing suspicion at the Ministry of Defense. A typical problem arose in connection with his project to order supersonic MIG jet fighter planes from the Soviets. Cheaper than the planes he could have obtained from the West, they could also be bought in India's own currency, the rupee, rather than in dollars or pounds. But the acquisition of them would inevitably result in a certain technical reorientation toward Russian-made weapons systems.

At the end of May, 1962, the Defense Ministry's budget was discussed in the *Lok Sabha*. Krishna Menon acknowledged that India was considering the purchase of the Russian fighters. India's military purchases, he argued, would be determined by "self-interest conditioned by ethical considerations." India wanted these fighters to offset the twelve F-104's Pakistan had received from the United States the previous year. "We have got to get everything we can," he said, "to protect our borders." The Defense Ministry had no ideology in its purchases, he added, and he listed the factors that appeared to favor the MIG's: cost, performance, availability of spare parts, and the ability to carry weapons that were not too costly to India.

The United States and Britain expressed concern over the plan: the United States, because such a purchase would constitute Russian military aid rendered possible by American economic assistance; Britain, because the Soviet technicians

accompanying the latest MIG's to India might have access to classified British-made equipment.

Long before the MIG crisis, however, the Defense Ministry had become embroiled in controversy. The private affairs of the Ministry of Defense in New Delhi erupted into the open in September, 1959. The houses of parliament and the editorial offices resounded with them. Again Krishna Menon was in the eye of the hurricane. This time his own chiefs of staff were up in arms against him. The army chief of staff, General K. S. Thimayya, was so incensed that he offered his resignation to Nehru, and intimated that its immediate acceptance would not be too soon for him. The chief of the naval staff, Vice Admiral R. D. Katari, and the chief of the air staff, Air Marshal S. Mukerjee, were also on the warpath. The press hinted that the trouble had erupted over administrative questions and, particularly, the Minister's policy of promotion. The dispute reached the floor of the inquisitive *Lok Sabha* in due time.

It seems that promotions had been made without consulting the chiefs of the armed services. Had those promotions been based on grounds other than merit, and if so, what had they been? Promotions, it was intimated, were subordinated to Krishna Menon's "peculiar predilections." These, in turn, were motivated by political concerns. Krishna Menon was referred to as the "ugly face of India's foreign policy" in the debate which ensued.

Other things were also ventilated on the floor of the *Lok Sabha*—financial irregularities in the Ministry of Defense, including grave mistakes in audit reports, fictitious financial adjustments, "infructuous purchases" and avoidable expenditures. Why could not the Ministry of Defense exercise closer vigilance over these matters? Krishna Menon was charged

with responsibility. Again, he was not accused of having derived pecuniary benefit from these transactions. On the contrary, the trouble was his lack of interest in monetary problems.

Prime Minister Nehru rushed to the defense of his besieged cabinet member. "What kind of a *tamasha* is this?" he wanted to know. What sort of funny business was this? Yes, he had received Thimayya's resignation, and did not like it. The whole thing was trivial, and top officers should not be so thin-skinned. Yes, the civil authority was supreme in India. At the same time, it should heed the advice of the experts. The financial mixup was unimportant, too, and could easily be straightened out. He paid tribute to Krishna Menon for his "great energy and enthusiasm." The opposition speakers objected. While Nehru had paid tribute to the minister of defense, he had said nothing about the work of the service chiefs. The Prime Minister stuck to his guns. The officers were gallant men, but they should not have turned a molehill into a mountain. And there the matter rested; a triumph for the minister of defense.

Not much later two of the service chiefs were replaced: Thimayya by General P. N. Thapar, and Air Marshal Mukerjee by Air Marshal A. M. Engineer. Only Vice Admiral Katari remained at his post, as he made his peace with the minister of defense.

Was there anything more to this incident than the facts aired on the floor of the *Lok Sabha*? Krishna Menon's position, some of the newspapers reflected, appeared to be stronger now than ever before. Was he strengthening his grip on the ministry of defense in preparation for greater things to come? Was Krishna Menon maneuvering himself toward a position of greater power, to be assumed after his mentor,

Panditji, known to be ailing, had passed from the political scene? The *New Statesman and Nation*, usually not hostile to left-wing causes, echoed these suspicions. Although, it said, Krishna Menon did not appear to be the stuff of which dictators were made, he could easily maneuver himself into a position of great—perhaps decisive—power owing to the key position he held at the ministry of defense.

Foreign observers such as John Masters, novelist and former Indian Army officer, have been deeply critical of Menon's record as Defense Minister, charging that he has dangerously weakened India's defense posture. But the validity of these criticisms or the fears of those who believe that Krishna Menon will use his ministerial position for his own political advantage can only be evaluated in the light of events yet to come.

CHAPTER XVII

“Goa Constrictor”

Mountain in its Azure Hue

COLUMBUS HAD BEEN A FAILURE, but Vasco da Gama was a success. The “India” of the former turned out to be America, and who cared for it, until Eldorado’s gold began to dazzle Spanish eyes. But Vasco da Gama *did* find the road to India, not across the Ocean Sea, but by doubling the Cape of Storms, which afterward became the Cape of Good Hope. The landfall of the Portuguese navigator was at Calicut, the former home of Krishna Menon. And it was Krishna Menon who put an end to the Portuguese conquerors’ rule.

The British had relinquished their empire after World War II. As for France, nothing but a few small enclaves remained of the French dream in India—Pondichéry, Karikal, Chander-nagor, Mahé and Yanaon, on both coasts, the Coromandel and the Malabar. While France was still mistress of Indochina, her mastery of these enclaves still had some sense. But when Indochina was lost, French Indian enclaves became anachronisms, and causes of bad blood. Consequently, on May 28,

1956, Paris and New Delhi set their signatures to a treaty the first paragraph of which read:

Considering that their governments, faithful to the common declaration made in 1947 and desirous of strengthening their bonds of friendship, established since then between France and India, have manifested their intention of settling amicably the problem of French establishments in India . . . have decided to conclude a treaty establishing [their] cession. . . .

This was the end of France in India, and the beginning of closer relations between the two countries.

Portuguese India was a larger territory, with a longer history, indeed the longest history any modern European state had in India. It was linked to Portugal's hallowed traditions, religious and secular. Its continued existence in its hostile environment was conditioned both by Portugal's unwillingness to come to terms with modern history, and by deeply rooted vested interests. The Portuguese called it *Estado da India*—the State of India—and that was another insult, indicating that there were two Indias on this globe, only one of which had for its capital New Delhi. The "other India" had for its capital the city of Pangim. It consisted of 1,396 square miles, comprising three enclaves on the Malabar Coast, facing the Arabian Sea. To the north of Goa—the largest—were Damao, including the territories of Dadra and Nagar-Aveli, in the neighborhood of Bombay, and Diu, an island across from Damao, on the Gulf of Cambay, whose region included also the Portuguese coastal territories of Gogola and Simbor. These regions were not poor in natural resources, since they produced manganese, iron ore, coconuts, cashew, copra, spices, fish, salt and rice. Their total population was some 650,000.

The enclave of Goa itself comprised the *Velhas Conquistas*

—the Old Conquests—and the *Novas Conquistas*, the new. These very names were bound to affront Indian sensibilities. This scented land of spice had a coastline of sixty miles, including a segment of the Western Ghats towering into a four thousand-foot peak.

The Portuguese Mars and the “New House”

The Portuguese had gained mastery of Goa under Affonso de Albuquerque, whom his contemporaries named “The Portuguese Mars,” founder of an empire in the East and viceroy of the Portuguese Indies. He fought with success the “infidel” king of Bijapur, Yusuf Adil Shah, a Moslem. The war the Portuguese waged against him was therefore a “crusade.” Soon afterward Portugal began her missionary work under the direction of the great Jesuit, St. Francis Xavier, described as “the greatest missionary since St. Paul.” The annual “novena of grace” in mid-March attests to his immortal fame. His headquarters was Goa, and from there he embarked on his activities in the vastly difficult and even dangerous region from Ceylon to Japan. At the very time when he was preparing an expedition into the remote land of China death overtook him. He was buried in the cathedral of Goa. To Portugal, a devoted Catholic land, therefore, Goa was not merely a highly valued overseas possession, but also a religious shrine.

Goa was an expatriate Iberian world. The red-tiled roofs of the houses and the Peninsular architecture contrasted keenly with the jungle setting reflected in the blue waters of the Arabian Sea. The whitewashed Catholic shrines and the cool churches further intensified the curious impression that this was some misplaced part of Southern Europe.

"Pangim still pulls down the siesta shutters against the cruel afternoon heat," an American correspondent wrote, "and statues of Portuguese heroes still stand on the squares, staring out over the waterfront."

Goa was the last remaining reminder of the past humiliation of the subcontinent. There, hated colonialism still conducted itself in the spirit of olden days, ruffling Indian patriotic sentiment. And Portugal itself, ruled by its apparently perennial Prime Minister, Dr. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, was in every way the social, political and economic antithesis of democratic, socialist India.

Salazar's Portugal was also considered particularly obnoxious for another reason. Indians were familiar with Africa, the "Dark Continent," and they knew that it was darkest wherever Portugal ruled. It was an anomaly and an abomination to have a slice of Portugal right in the core-land of progressive-minded India. But what was New Delhi to do? It was dedicated to the policy of non-violence.

Krishna Menon had, of course, spoken about this on many occasions. On the tenth birthday of the United Nations he had quoted his country's sainted Gandhiji to the effect that there could be no gap between means and ends. On another solemn occasion he had declared: "We cannot make peace by means of war." And again: "India will take no steps involving the use of force, even if legal right is on our side."

Thus it was unarmed Indians who tried to force their way into Goa on August 25, 1955, bent on demonstrating national unity in the spirit of the late Gandhi, by peaceful means. However, the Portuguese armed forces had not been trained in the spirit of the revered Indian leader. They opened fire on the demonstrators, killing several of them. Krishna Menon took the case to the world tribunal in New York. Attempts

were made to induce Portugal to leave the territory in peace, but Salazar stood his ground. Goa, he said, was an organic portion of the *Republica Portuguesa*, and not part of India. And there the matter rested until late in 1961.

And Then the Thunderbolt

For weeks the Indian press and officials had been talking of large Portuguese concentrations of firepower in Goa. Then, on December 18, 1961, a crack Indian division moved into the territory, while naval units of the republic deployed, and Indian jets roared overhead. When the Indian forces moved across the border they found only four thousand Portuguese soldiers and some five thousand Goan policemen and guards. Instead of the armada reported previously in the Indian press, New Delhi's navy ran into one frigate, which was towed away as a prize of war. The entire operation lasted thirty-six hours. It cost India twenty-two and Portugal some forty lives. Indian officers later insisted that if the enemy had been in a mood to fight, the battle could have lasted two weeks.

The Indian operation was master-minded by Defense Minister Krishna Menon.

“For a good deal of the world,” an American writer commented, “and particularly for the United States, still mesmerized by the memory of Mahatma Gandhi's credo of non-violence, the invasion of Goa by India was shocking news. It was as if Little Lord Fauntleroy had suddenly turned out to be a juvenile delinquent.”

Krishna Menon maintained that India had had no alternative. Public opinion in India had been aroused, and another peace march into Goa had been in the offing. The marchers

could not have been restrained, he said, as they were determined to cross the line. Had they done so, the Portuguese would have started shooting at them. "What were we to do? Let the Portuguese shoot our own people?"

The occupation of Goa electrified not only India but also many former colonial peoples. Portugal ranked low in the estimation of the Afro-Asian countries, and Premier Salazar was detested. To them Krishna Menon was a conquering hero.

In the western world, and particularly the United States, however, he was roundly criticized. Where was that famous Indian *satyagraha* hiding? And what was the United Nations for? Why had India not availed herself of the United States' offer to mediate a peaceful Portuguese exit?

There were those in the West who felt that there had been intensely practical reasons for Menon's part in the invasion of the Portuguese territories.

A general election in India had been scheduled for the near future. Krishna Menon had been due to face a formidable candidate in the North Bombay constituency, a man with a nationally known name. Krishna Menon's popularity rating at the moment had been low, not merely because of the stories about his quarrels with the top brass, but also because of the Chinese situation.

Embarrassing questions had been pouring in on the cabinet. Was Krishna Menon so complacent about the Chinese Reds because he had inhibitions in dealing with them? Granted that he himself was not a Communist, was he unable to let India's word be heard just because the Chinese were Reds?

Fortuitously, there was Goa, to help him out. It was not "in the moon," as was the contested borderland in the north. It possessed valuable industrial raw materials and farm prod-

ucts which India could use. Besides, it was the vestigial remainder of a despised age. Goa was under the heel of an autocrat whom the people of India equated with all the sins of imperialism. Obviously, Goa could not resist a region hundreds of times its size and with a population of hundreds of millions. This was bound to be a quick victory—popular and quick—which the North Bombay voters were bound to remember as they entered the election booths.

Krishna Menon's prestige, however, was hardly enhanced in the West. The chief American delegate to the U.N., Adlai Stevenson, chided him for his tireless enjoinders to other nations to seek the paths of peace, contradicted as they were by his militaristic action. A foreign diplomat called Krishna Menon the “Goa constrictor.”

After India had taken Goa, Krishna Menon hurried to offer his explanations to the United Nations in New York. A phalanx of pressmen confronted him, wanting to know how he could reconcile Gandhi's spirit with the employment of jet bombers. The occupation of Goa, he told them, was not an act of aggression. “What do you call it, then?” a reporter ventured to ask. “I will not put up with such rudeness,” Krishna Menon exploded. “Who are you to treat me like this?” The bewildered reporter tried to explain that his question was purely factual, and that no harm had been meant. “Apologize into the microphone,” Krishna Menon demanded, and the reporter apologized. Millions of TV viewers were privileged to witness this edifying encounter.

Meanwhile, Goa obtained two seats in the Indian *Lok Sabha*, assigned to her by President Rasendra Prasad, and Goa's official designation became “Union Territory,” not “State.” When an American correspondent visited the territory half a year later, he reported: “The Goan shopkeeper

said with a grimace and a grumble that his shelves had been empty since the Indian army came in. Then he said thoughtfully that the political jails had been, too."

And, in due course, Krishna Menon won his election.

CHAPTER XVIII

The People's Voice

At the Gateway of India

THE NATIONAL ELECTION took place at the end of February, 1962. Krishna Menon was facing formidable opposition to re-election to his North Bombay seat. Many people in India may be underfed, but no nation, no matter how poor, likes to be undernourished as regards news that will enable it to strike a heroic pose. India's own press had been heckling Krishna Menon about his reaction to the Chinese dragon, nibbling away precious Indian land in the North. He was vulnerable at election time on that score. On Goa, however, he shone like a knight in radiant armor.

Never had the world seen such an election campaign. The number of qualified voters was estimated at 210 million, and at least 125 million of them were expected to go to the polls in what was described as the biggest free election in history. The number of expected voters alone exceeded the combined populations of Great Britain, France, Australia and Canada. There were about 200,000 polling stations, some of them in

nearly inaccessible mountain areas, which could be reached only on foot. Candidates for the approximately five hundred seats in the *Lok Sabha* were campaigning, some of them calling attention to themselves in dramatic ways. Communist Party workers at Calcutta acted out skits on such issues as high prices, exorbitant rents and poor transportation. A Punjabi candidate campaigned from the prison cell to which he had been confined for attempting to murder his rival. A Congress Party aspirant in the Himalayan constituency of Ranikhet promised to deal with his district's most urgent problem—a tiger that had already devoured twenty people. Since most of the voters were illiterates, they were to use rubber stamps to make a cross after the name of the candidates of their choice. Each candidate's party symbol was reproduced on the ballot.

North Bombay was a "prestige constituency" and fairly safe for the National Congress, for which Krishna Menon was the candidate. He did not contest a seat in his own home district, Kerala, on the Malabar Coast. He had severed his relations with the South. Also, Kerala has the largest number of Communists in India, and had he been returned to parliament from there, the opposition could have claimed that he had been elected by the extreme left.

The Goddess of Fishermen

Mumba was the goddess of the fishermen who inhabited the eleven-mile-long island today named for her, and it was her name which became Bombay, after having passed through many distorting lips. Mumba seems to have been a fickle goddess, and fickle is certainly the word for the people of Bombay. The partial explanation may be their composition: the richest and the poorest, from the most diverse ethnic origins

—Gujeratis, Marathis, Cinhalese, Pushtus, Tibetans, Baghdad Jews, Punjabis, Sikhs and many others.

Bombay is a city of global shipping, with a constantly stirring waterfront kept churning by trade and banking. It is also a city of large industries. It is the home of people who have the means to rest on the finest damask sheets, and of people who live all their lives in the gutters of the streets. Bombay—like India—is more than a limited geographical unit, more than a city, or even a country—it is the world itself. The very language of the bulk of its people is a cosmopolitan mixture, *Bombay Bat*, a lingua franca in which are embedded Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Pushtu, with an admixture of pidgin English. It was not easy to reach such an audience in an election campaign, especially if one was as sophisticated as Krishna Menon—and as snobbish.

Krishna Menon's principal opponent was Nehru's former companion and jailmate, Acharya Kripalani, a nationally known and highly respected name. Formerly he had belonged to the Congress Party, but now he was the standard-bearer of the Praja Socialist Party, which considered parts of the Congress program dated and aimed at the establishment of a democratic Socialist society.

Besides being a Socialist, Kripalani was strongly anti-Communist, and perhaps even more strongly anti-Krishna Menon. He did not stand alone in opposition to the Minister of Defense. Other parties, including the *Jana Singh* Party—"India Firsters" who detested the Moslems, Christians, and untouchables—and many others, were in the running. Also opposed to Krishna Menon was the newly established conservative party, *Swatantra*, founded by India's first Governor-General, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, a prominent leader from Madras. "Our party is in revolt against statism," he declared. The

Moslem League also advised its cohorts to vote against Krishna Menon.

The Communists, on the other hand, supported him.

The Sound and Fury of the Battle

His election posters symbolized the theme of Kripalani's campaign. They showed a bayonet held by Red China stabbing into the body of India: "Menon represents China—not India." Who had been the minister of defense at the time when the Chinese had started humiliating India by capturing her border patrols? The same Krishna Menon who had instructed the Indian border guards not to return the Reds' fire.

"I have come North," Kripalani said at an election rally, "to warn you against the Communist danger to your households, your freedom, and all the values you hold dear."

And again: "If you vote wrongly on February 25, you will encourage the Chinese who have already occupied 14,000 square miles of our land, to nibble away at our territory. The history of the 250 years of British conquest will be repeated. The current situation has been brought about by Mr. Menon's inept handling of our national defenses."

All the opposition candidates charged that Krishna Menon had the Communists' full support and that they never seemed to attack or even as much as criticize him. Kripalani extended his criticism to the entire Congress leadership, which had taken Krishna Menon under its protective wing. "My criticism of the government," Kripalani said, "is on the grounds of ethics and everyday human values." He wanted to know why the government of which Krishna Menon was a key member had stood by while Tibet was raped, and why India

had not sided with the free world at the time of the Hungarian revolution.

The Big Battalions for the Minister of Defense

The Congress Party mustered its big battalions for the defense of Krishna Menon. Bombay is situated in the state of Maharashtra, the chief minister of which, Y. B. Chavan, made clear the special interest of the Congress Party in the North Bombay election. Mr. Chavan was an influential man, being also minister of home, planning and industries. The election, he noted, was of international importance, and its outcome was bound to affect the future of the entire nation for at least a decade.

As the day of the balloting approached, the election fever reached a critical peak. The political commentator of the pro-Congress but anti-Krishna Menon daily, *The Hindustan Times*, said just before the voting day:

For the voters, North Bombay will go down as the most exciting and controversial election in history, with the election issues brought home to them through the media of posters, the written and the spoken word, and tape-recorded verses and songs. In many ways, the poll has been an education in current politics and political vocabulary. The meanings of such words as "crypto-Communist" and "fellow-travelers" are now not beyond the comprehension of the common people. The danger to our northern borders from China has also loomed large in the election issues.

Krishna Menon solemnly declared that he was averse to political mudslinging and to fighting his opponents with lies. The present election—he said in a key speech in Sunderabai Hall—would help to separate the wheat from the chaff, and

to promote the political education of the electorate. The policy of the government would not be changed, "though many people of the West and some people here too are trying to pressurize it into war alliances and a war." Those who opposed socialism, he warned, were wrong, because "this economic revolution is inevitable." The government preferred to have it happen by common consent, but, he added grimly, the "alternative was inevitable," if the consent was absent.

This cryptic statement, with its ominous undertones, called for clarification. He did not provide it.

Shortly before election day, thousands of people gesticulating and shouting "Vote for Menon!" marched to the *Express* group newspaper offices in Bombay, and made a bonfire of its English and Marathi-language daily publications. The *Express* was a staunch supporter of Kripalani in the North Bombay contest. One of the leaders of the demonstration was a member of parliament from Kashmir, the other, one from Delhi. They demanded that the newspapers stop attacking Krishna Menon. The Kashmiri member of parliament was overheard saying that the crowd had been in just the right mood to smash the newspaper building, but that he had managed to pacify it. Incessantly the demonstrators kept on shouting, "Menon will win the North Bombay election." Others shouted, "Those who oppose him will be ground to dust." Some distance from the newspaper offices the police stopped the demonstrators.

Mr. Nehru Steps In

The Prime Minister went all out in backing Krishna Menon. The keystone of his talks was, "If you are against Krishna Menon, you are against me." Panditji said at open-air meetings

on Connaught Place—the Times Square of New Delhi—that Kripalani's supporters were adopting the techniques of the late Senator McCarthy in branding Krishna Menon a Communist. McCarthyism had done great harm to America, he added, and if it came to India "it will spell our ruination." To call Mr. Menon a Communist, Nehru said, was a fantastic lie. "Mr. Menon is a Socialist, as myself, and he is a real Socialist, and not an arm-chair one." On the other hand, Acharya Kripalani was being helped by all kinds of reactionaries—the wealthy people, the big newspapers and both Hindu and Moslem communalists.

"Vote Menon," said a Menon poster, "and support Nehru."

"Vote Kripalani," said a Kripalani poster, "and save Nehru."

Election day finally came, the voters delivered their verdict and the votes were counted. Krishna Menon's showing was better than the Congress Party had anticipated. He had polled 296,304 votes against 151,437 for Kripalani. Goa, it seemed, had paid off.

Kripalani and his supporters did not accept defeat stoically. "Krishna Menon's victory was the victory of the Reds." A political cartoon in the *The Hindustan Times* was captioned, "North Bombay Championship Bout: Killer Kripalani vs. Mauler Menon." It showed a boxing ring in which a huge figure labeled "Commies" was carrying out the defense minister, who had just kicked another figure, marked "Anti-Menon Front," in the snout. Nehru was clapping his hands gently in his ringside seat, while Khrushchev threw up his cap in undisguised jubilation.

The election confirmed the Congress Party in its established place with a margin more than ample for the next five

years, after which there would have to be another national election. Krishna Menon, as saturnine-looking as ever, commented that the outcome of the election manifested the political maturity of India's electorate.

CHAPTER XIX

The Image and the Enigma

Krishna Menon's Role

FRANK MORAES, the Indian author and newspaperman, has written, in *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography*:

The closest to him [Nehru] today is probably the didactic and controversial V. K. Krishna Menon . . . Menon has an aptitude for rationalising Nehru's instinct and impulses, particularly in the field of foreign affairs, and of clothing them in clear, precise language and logical thought. . . . Lean, stringy, saturnine, with a caustic tongue and a look of imperious disdain, he suggests (too easily perhaps) the Grey Eminence hovering balefully in the background.

Referring to the close relation between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his principal adviser, Moraes refers to Krishna Menon as Prime Minister Nehru's Harry Hopkins. Krishna Menon is Panditji's *éminence grise*.

The two men seem to be utterly different, in their backgrounds, manners and temperaments. Yet, as we have seen, there is an intellectual kinship between them. The Congress,

being a political organization, has a large contingent of little people with big ambitions—shallow politicians, time-servers. Krishna Menon the intellectual is not of their ilk, and this fact alone may have appealed to Panditji.

If the two men were active in American politics they would stand somewhere well to the left of center in the Democratic Party. America can afford to be capitalistic, because it has vast accumulations of capital. But India is not America. The capital she has is limited, and is concentrated in few hands. Outside of that, she is beset by a poverty which must be seen to be believed. Capitalism without adequate capital is not only an impossibility but an absurdity. Yet India cannot afford to have events overwhelm her. People are no longer content to have independence as an abstract notion. Freedom means also freedom from hunger for famished people. The Indian government must, therefore, raise living standards. No matter how poor, a country disposes of larger resources than even the richest individuals. Therefore, according to Nehru and Menon, the need for the social solution of India's economic problems—the Socialist way.

Not a few observers of the Indian scene—and they are not all Communists—believe that the indigenous system is so congealed in a "cake of custom" that it can no longer be softened by normal methods, and therefore must be broken open. The Russians did that in their own country, and turned it into the largest industrial nation in the Old World. Although an appalling number of human lives were lost in the process, they believe that history is concerned only with results.

Consequently, the Indian leaders might easily have taken the Russian pattern as the only one likely to lead to results. It is to be assumed that they would have softened its rigors,

in line with their policy of *satyagraha*. But, in fact, they have not taken the Soviet route. They have turned to a mixed economy—the government helping out where the classical methods of free enterprise failed.

Nehru and Krishna Menon apparently see eye to eye on this basic problem. America has become more sensitive to overtones of political ideology than most western nations. To many Americans some of Nehru's statements in the past have sounded "radical." Some of Krishna Menon's statements still sound like Communism. However, the important thing is not what a man sounds like, but what he does. The history of contemporary India provides the answer. She is still part of what we call the free world—so far.

The two leading men of India in the country's most critical period of nation-building seem to have agreed on the essentials not only in domestic matters but also in the foreign field—the special concern of the man from the Malabar Coast. Krishna Menon, the "formula manipulator," has a categorical mind. Although many Americans do not like his formulas, a surprisingly large number of these "formulas" have been acceptable to a majority of the nations, certainly to the Afro-Asian nations.

His Philosophy

Krishna Menon's favorite photo of himself in recent years has been that of Lotte Meitner-Graf: a thoughtful face resting on a relaxed hand, with a soupçon of a smile on his lips; not the face of a man of action, but that of a philosopher. Yet when I asked him about his philosophy of life, he countered, "When a person has a philosophy of life, he is ready to die."

Obviously, he does have a philosophy of life. Not so obviously, it is the very reverse of the Hindu attitude.

Hinduism believes that man's fate is predetermined, the result of the all-pervasive *karma*, deed. Human beings' deeds prescribe their future status in reincarnation; good deeds are rewarded, evil ones punished. Only the final stage, *nirvana*, can bring freedom and ultimate release.

All creatures have, under this creed, *dharma*, the duty to perform one's obligations. These obligations in human society are to the caste, the social group and the family. Krishna Menon does not believe in *karma*, in *nirvana*, or in man's predetermined fate. He holds that there could be little progress if the world were destined always to move in the same grooves. In that case, there would be no need for diplomacy, or for the United Nations.

A strong belief in peace is an important part of Krishna Menon's professed philosophy. "But more than talk is needed," he says. "You must have a peaceful approach to problems and eventually it will create the proper conditions for peace." His practical philosophy culminates in the call for coexistence among the nations: "When a child grows up, it lives in the same house, but must have a separate room. This is family coexistence. But, then, coexistence is a stilted expression for something the world has always known."

Inaugurating a lecture series organized by the *Amar Hind Mandal*—Eternal India Association—he expressed his view on the workings of democracy:

Two developments have helped democracy in India. The first was the growing conviction among the people that their political and social conditions could be changed. . . . With the growing participation of the people in the government, proper education has become more essential or else the wrong kind of government might get into the saddle.

Speaking about freedom of expression, he said: "No matter how scurrilous newspapers might turn out to be, I would not like them to be suppressed except when matters concerning the security of the state were involved."

The qualification, of course, is not inconsiderable.

Charming and Rude

"Krishna can be charming—about twenty per cent of the time," said Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru's sister. He can also be uncharming. He can look through people as though they were glass. He can be overbearing and arrogant. When he wants to indicate that he is bored, he yawns and keeps on doing so, directly in the face of the speaker or performer concerned. One of the famous photographs of him shows him dozing off, in company, at an exclusive New York café. He employs intemperate words. And he is a snob.

He was asked, in the early stages of World War II, if he could see any difference between the Nazis and the Franco-English alliance. "You might as well ask the fish if it prefers to be fried in butter or margarine," he replied.

He likes to dwell on the "struggle among imperialists." He made a statement on a Philadelphia radio station at the time of the Korean war to the effect that the United States had deliberately sabotaged his peace plan by bombing the power plants on the Yalu River, between Korea and China. He also accused the United States of having brought China into that war by pushing beyond the 38th parallel, which had been the boundary between Communist North Korea and the anti-Communist South. When the administration in Washington lodged a protest to New Delhi over this statement,

Mr. Nehru replied evasively: "Krishna Menon does not speak for India on every occasion."

Here are some other "Menonisms," directed mainly at the United States:

"You Americans always want everything in black and white. You make everyone sign on the dotted line."

"America wants to be the leader of a holy alliance in defense of legitimacy, the status quo, no matter how intolerable."

He seldom admits that he has ever said intemperate or ill-considered things. "What I have to say is not meant for today or for the next year but for a generation or more, when people will be ready to accept what they criticize today."

He disclaims any intention to affront the United States.

"Actually, I have never criticized the internal politics of the United States. I have been asked, for example, what I think of the Negro problem in America. I refrain from answering such questions, since they do not concern me. My job is not to deal with questions which arise in the United States. I am not here to convict the whole world. It is really a small matter who dislikes whom as long as the job is done."

"It is a great mistake to think," he told an Indian audience, "that everybody is against us in the United States. We would be throwing out the baby with the bathwater if in the process of criticism we created . . . antagonisms which we cannot bridge."

In an obscure explanation of his numerous attacks on the West, he has said that he criticizes it more than the East because this is bound to produce better results. "The West is more redeemable."

Although Krishna Menon has a wide-spread reputation for arrogance, especially at U. N. General Assembly meetings, he makes a special point—as shown before—of professing modesty—indeed, aggressively so. Few delegates make more frequent use of the tiresome formulas “in all humility,” and “in my humble submission.”

In fact, modesty is not one of his more notable qualities. He is a born actor, and thrives in the limelight. When I showed him the book I had written about India he quickly turned to the index. I assured him that his name was mentioned in the book.

“You know,” an Indian reporter said about him, “when somebody else faints you wave smelling salts in front of him. When Krishna Menon faints, you wave the microphone.”

One day he did faint in front of the microphone, in full view of the distinguished audience of the U. N. General Assembly. His alleged first words after he recovered were: “Where is the man from the Associated Press?”

England, With All Her Faults

He was astringent about Britain’s “imperialism” in India’s pre-independence days, but now those strictures are largely forgotten. Today he admires Britain, an aspect of his thinking that becomes obvious after one has spent a few minutes with him. “Britain is tolerant,” he keeps repeating, “Britain is civilized.” One feels that this insistent eulogy carries with it a strong implied contempt for the United States.

He wants friendship firmly founded between Britain and India. He wanted India to remain with the Commonwealth, and would have liked even closer relations. Krishna Menon has been sponsoring causes, organizations and publications

to foster British-Indian friendship. In 1955 he founded the magazine *Envoy*, ostensibly "to promote friendship between India and Britain." It is a well-edited, glossy periodical, started as a monthly, now a bimonthly, explaining the two countries to each other from various points of view.

"Scratches on Our Minds"

What about the public image of Krishna Menon in the United States, Great Britain and India? A prominent American sociologist, Harold R. Isaacs, research associate at the Center for International Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, undertook to inquire into a matter that has suddenly become of great importance to all of us: What kind of ideas do Americans carry about in their heads regarding the rest of the world? His findings were published in a book called *Scratches on Our Minds*.*

Mr. Isaacs set out to look for the answers by interviewing nearly two hundred Americans occupying important places in our society. They were government officials, diplomats, journalists, educators, missionaries and businessmen, many of them with experience in both India and the United States. The author fashioned his report out of their schoolday memories, personal experiences, the wisps remaining in their minds from printed sources, movies and personal contacts. Here we are concerned only with the "scratches on our minds" concerning Krishna Menon. He and Nehru were the only two Indian leaders mentioned by the interviewees in the course of a free-association and "stream of consciousness" discussion.

* New York: The John Day Company, 1958. The following excerpts are reprinted with permission.

"The Alter Image: Menon" is the title of the section that deals with Krishna Menon. As Nehru's alter ego, the reader is told, he is also his alter image, upon whom Nehru's friends feel free to project the stronger feelings they cannot apply to their hero. Somewhere close to the end of the spectrum, where "Nehru's policies are most strongly opposed and his personality pictured in its least attractive light, we begin to come upon the image of another Indian figure, V. K. Krishna Menon, long Nehru's principal roving ambassador and chief of India's delegation to the United Nations."

Of the twenty-six interviewees who brought up the subject of Menon, all had encountered him personally, but only four offered marginal reservations in his favor. One was a top American official who had often faced Menon in United Nations debates.

"He is a man of elusive values," this American diplomat said, "able but not frank or reliable, you always have to watch him carefully. He is always patronizing. He seems to have to keep on reassuring himself. But I can overlook this. He has courage and nerve and I rather enjoy tussling with him. He is never boring."

Said one of the other three men with the mental reservations for Krishna Menon: "A Machiavelli with a swelled head, though he has his good sides, too; a pretty vicious guy, but you have to respect him. . . ."

"I even like Krishna Menon," one of these interviewees said. "We get along, though he does with very few. He is a prickly character, but we enjoy scrapping; he lectures me and I lecture him."

But more typical of the majority was this opinion:

A devil incarnate. It relieves me to know that he lived most of his life out of India. He is vile in personal relationships and

in every possible way. I can understand anti-Americanism, but what disturbs me more in Menon are his personal traits and the terrible feeling that he is really sincere in all this. He has done enormous harm over here and I wish Nehru would send him back to India.

And here are samples of other views of Krishna Menon from the same inquiry:

More objectionable than anybody I have ever met in my life; a poisonous fellow; rubs people the wrong way; always fighting to assert his masculinity, keen and lashing in a fight, a dangerous man; he was quite insulting to our delegates at the United Nations, I experienced it myself when I served there; a pro-Communist, anti-American blackmail agent; Menon is actively inimical to Americans; he just does not like them; I feel no sincerity in him at all, can never believe a thing he says; Menon is the archetype of the kind of unpleasant people Forster described in *A Passage to India*, glib, unctuous, self-righteous, arrogant; if Nehru wants to improve relations, let him withdraw the loud-mouthed, anti-American Menon. . . .

And finally:

. . . Menon is the man who has had a peculiar success in persuading almost everyone he encounters that he is really as obnoxious as he appears to be. . . . There seems to be some slight perplexity about Menon's personal political views, but he leaves no doubt about his acidulous contempt for everything pertaining to Americans and the United States.

. . . And the Undergraduates

These are the views of some of the leaders of thought in America. At the other extreme are the "scratches on the minds" of college students. I requested several friends, college teachers, to have some of their students express their

views about Krishna Menon, views they had collected through the usual channels—school, publications, other media of information, including the radio and television. There were about a hundred of them, college freshmen, not overburdened with knowledge of the world, and not social science majors. They were innocent of special knowledge of India, except where class discussions had tackled some of her current problems. There was also another group, some forty persons, who were upperclassmen and social science majors.

Not all the lower classmen could correctly identify Krishna Menon, and he was totally unknown to some 45 per cent. This inquiry about him was made shortly after his spectacular re-election to the North Bombay seat in the *Lok Sabha* early in 1962.

The answers of the students were given mainly in short, crisp words. The most common expressions they used were “arrogant” and “leftist.”

Some of the students elaborated:

He has leftist leanings and is considered pro-Communist by many. Some say that he is anti-white and anti-United States. For this reason he is hated by many in the West.

My opinion [commented another student] is based only on newspaper reports. With all this talk about his Communist leanings, I would say that he is rather a shady character to be in charge of the defense of a country like India.

And these further observations:

Problem: Menon is pro-Communist and he is second in command in India. Question: When Nehru goes and Menon takes over, will India go Communist?

He leans toward communism . . . He is disliked in this country for his sympathy toward communism . . . He is a very controversial figure . . . From what I have read and heard about

him I can say that I don't exactly like his principles, but I have to admit that he is doing as much as he can for India.

And these further observations of many freshmen:

I believe that Menon is an able man, having his nation's welfare on his mind but that he is approaching his duties the wrong way . . . Mr. Menon appears to be a very cynical man. He has made a very bad impression on me, as he appears to be more to the left and unwilling to cooperate with the United States . . . My only visual contact on the TV gave me the impression that he is a very explosive man who resents being put in a bad light by reporters . . . He is not the best man in such a position [minister of defense] in his country . . . He is said to be a good buddy of Nehru but I do feel that their policies differ too greatly to believe that they are really close associates . . . In my opinion, Mr. Menon is the farthest left force in India . . . While Mr. Nehru sides more with the West, I believe that he is being influenced by Mr. Menon . . . In dealing with this man, the United States should be very careful, since he has been very critical of us and our diplomacy, as far as India is concerned . . . From every source I read and from every fact I learned I decided that Menon is the cloud hovering over India. It is he who prevents India being a strictly neutral power, for his allegiance seems to be more with the Soviet Union than with the United States.

A single dissenter wrote:

I personally believe that Mr. Menon is not as terrible or as leftist as the newspapers seem to imply. His animosity toward the American press may or may not be completely justified but there is no excuse for the papers to distort this man's actions so it seems he is wholly leftist. The mere fact that Nehru supports Mr. Menon is evidence enough for me to have a favorable impression and respect for the beliefs of this man.

Greater sophistication was manifested in the opinions of some of the upperclassmen. Here are a few samples:

He is arrogant, intelligent, aggressive, self-centered, egotistical, an opportunist . . . and I don't trust him.

In my opinion he represents the aggressive and authoritarian voice in Indian affairs today. But he is a strong power. I think that he likes to think that he is following in Gandhi's path. Yet, I don't think that he represents the majority of the people of India.

To me he is arrogant, crude, also polite, graceful, and at the same time stupid, dogmatic and weak-willed. In other words, he changes his colors like a chameleon. He is all things to all men, basically unfriendly to the West and neutral to the Communists. He seeks the greater glory of Krishna Menon at the expense of India. He is too smart and self-assured. He is belicose and an appeaser, depending upon the circumstances.

And another student, gazing into the future:

I feel that he will never become the leader of India, since his arrogant ways have alienated the people.

It all adds up to this: *molto antipático*.

. . . *And the Press*

Public media of all sorts in the U.S. are almost unanimous in their dislike of Menon. He seems to have provided the model for the characterization of a villainous Oriental in a recent best-selling novel on political life in Washington. When writing about him, American newspapers tend to lose their manners, if not their objectivity. The *Time-Life-Fortune* combine, particularly, does not seem to be able to utter his name without hissing. The general tone of the press is indicated in the headlines of a few representative articles in leading periodicals. "Mouthpiece Extraordinary, Troublemaker Plenipotentiary" was the title of a detailed editorial

in *Life*. "Krishna Menon: The Wasp of New Delhi" was the title of an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*. *Time* has headlined its articles with "Writhing Words," "Nyet," "Great I Am" and others. "Menon Kicked Upstairs" and "Menon Riding High" were headlines in the *New Republic*. The *Reporter* remarked that Krishna Menon's "unique gift of being unpleasant to the largest possible number of people is universally known." The same periodical commented that Menon has become increasingly unpopular in India and is widely believed to be a fellow traveler.

Other American press comments:

He has an unfortunate personality . . . He is evasive . . . He is rude . . . He meddles. . . .

And the constantly recurring *leitmotif*:

He is complex . . . He is mysterious. . . .

The Press of India

With few exceptions, the press of India itself dislikes Krishna Menon. "Mr. Menon must go," said an article in *The Hindustan Times*, which is pro-Congress and therefore is supposed to follow the Nehru line. "Whether or not Menon is a Communist," wrote this important New Delhi daily, "his actions have constantly benefited the Communists, so that India's defenses cannot be trusted to such a man when the enemy is China."

A leading columnist of India, A. G. Gorwala, has made much the same comments in the *Times of India*. Indeed, he has gone one step further, by saying flatly that Krishna Menon is a Communist.

An Indian political leader told *New York Times* corre-

spondent A. M. Rosenthal: "He is a disaster, I tell you, that man. Why does Panditji keep him? What does he see in that man?"

The same correspondent noted: "It is becoming almost impossible to have a dinner table conversation in New Delhi that does not get around to V. K. Krishna Menon. And more often than not it ends on the same note of resignation: 'What does Nehru see in that Man?'"

A prominent Indian editor introduced another note into the discussion by saying that although Krishna Menon was bright enough, he had a warped personality and should therefore be taken out of the diplomatic post.

Yet the same Krishna Menon occasionally becomes a national hero in India, when he stands up to Pakistan, the United States and other countries in the United Nations on the Kashmir issue. He gets high praise on such occasions, even from some of the most cantankerous representatives of the press.

. . . And the British

At the time of the Suez crisis Krishna Menon was described in the popular, large-circulation British press as the stooge of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser. Most of the British newspapers did not like Krishna Menon's "anti-imperialist" crusade in the Congo, which he carried on not only on United Nations platforms but also on television screens. Few of England's pressmen were throwing bouquets at the delegate of India for his work on the Kashmir issue.

Yet despite these strictures, Krishna Menon has not been depicted as "all black" in the British press. Representative of this shaded attitude are the comments of that famous British institution, *The Economist*. While castigating Krishna Menon

for his "filibustering tactics" on the Kashmir issue, it has praised him for his "efficient handling of the defense portfolio of India." In an intriguing juxtaposition of Krishna Menon and foreign-policy-conscious Americans, this weekly commented in its January 24, 1959, issue:

In their wistful moments, many Americans still yearn to play the part of a super-Sweden or Switzerland, patching up other peoples' quarrels . . . rather than acting as a major interested party themselves. Some of that yearning is seen in the vestigial presence of the anti-colonial theme, while the painfulness of repressing this theme is betrayed by the violent reaction of the self-righteous Mr. Krishna Menon.

"The Revolt of the Classes"

The Krishna Menon "enigma" is the composite of numerous ingredients. The environment in which he grew up is one of these. Extremes collide head-on in Kerala—the most dynamic and the most static forces of India. The Malabar Coast has been open to the irradiation of Western dynamism longer than any other part of the subcontinent. This dynamism, while not a revolutionary influence in the political sense, has forced constant comparisons on the attentions of inquisitive young men—such as Krishna Menon—compelling them to weigh the respective values of East and West. On the other hand, the obscurities of the primeval forests back of the coast have presented the challenge of a stagnant civilization. Hemmed in by these opposing forces, the creative minority of young people have developed a questioning stance, which has manifested itself in the contagious discontent of those who have had the capacity to see and to compare. Many of them have left the Malabar Coast in an attempt to find the answers in South Africa, Singapore or Burma. Today, the

Indian Communists have their strongest Indian bulwark in Kerala.

The "enigma" of Krishna Menon is also that of many newly awakened people. The "revolt of the classes" erupted all over India in the twentieth century—the revolt of the intellectual classes. It was a revolt against colonialism, which was the causative agent of frustration and humiliation. Set against this was the search of the "angry young men" for the evidences of India's greatness—for her towering literary achievements, works of art and philosophy of life, which promised to restore the balance missing in modern Indian life, the balance between spiritual and material values.

When he was young, Krishna Menon habitually underemphasized Britain's contribution to India's survival. He did not wish to admit that Britain had been able to establish herself on the subcontinent because of the jungle-like growth of intrigues and feuds. Yet the *Pax Britannica* had been a drastic remedy that probably kept the patient, the subcontinent, from bleeding to death.

Eventually, Krishna Menon slipped out of Britain's India and found sanctuaries, first at Adyar, where he came across a Britain that extolled India, and then in Camden Town. He came to the conclusion that the British had been perverting their democratic and humane philosophy to ends that were in direct contradiction to their own interests.

With the constant broadening of his horizon, he came to believe that not only India but also Britain could gain greatly by abandoning the master-lackey relationship. This insight gave his life a new, almost obsessive, direction.

In spite of rule by one of the most advanced western countries, India found herself, in the twentieth century, in the least advanced stages of economic development. She was

floundering in a morass of secular stagnation, her habits impeded by traditions which the British neglected to change on the ground that they did not wish to interfere with the mores of their charges.

As Krishna Menon looked around he saw that other backward nations were moving upward. There was, for instance, the former Ottoman Empire, now called Turkey, in which life was no longer mortgaged to the interests and jealousies of greedy powers. Turkey was entering what Professor Walt Rostow has called the transitional phase—the second in the developmental sequence—under the leadership of that remarkable statesman, Mustafa Kemal, whom his countrymen called *Ataturk*—Father of the Turks. Turkey was erecting an industrial infrastructure, which was helping to turn the country from being a house of death to being a house of life.

As Krishna Menon's eyes swept beyond Turkey, he found an even more fascinating example of a country in the third stage of development, the economic take-off. This was the Soviet Union, whose own version of "Operation Bootstrap" was to lift it to the level of the industrially advanced countries. Krishna Menon was not then aware of the price the Russians had to pay for this advance, and he may not be aware of it now.

The fourth stage of development is the "drive to maturity," and the final phase of it is that of "high mass consumption." Yet India had not been allowed to take even the second step. She, the cradle of one of the world's great civilizations, the erstwhile "gleam in the eye" of greedy western man, had been left far behind.

As Krishna Menon saw it, the enemy, the solely responsible political "devil," was imperialism. Krishna Menon hated it with a passion which bordered on the pathological, while, at

the same time, he was making new and disconcerting discoveries about British "imperialists at home." They were not the unbending martinets he had seen on the Malabar Coast. He found it possible to talk to them, and, sometimes, they would even listen. He could convince some of them that their own best interests lay in a prosperous and self-assured India, generating her own motive force, powered by indigenous enthusiasm, ascending the steps of economic development into the stage of economic take-off and beyond. Simultaneously, he discovered his own niche in the scheme of things, a gap he could fill, so that he could cease to be a human cipher: his role of *guru* to those people who were willing to listen.

And Then the Miracle

Through The India League and through every other available means, Krishna Menon pursued the goal of Indian independence with single-minded fanaticism. During the whole twenty-four years of his sojourn in England—years of crucial importance in his intellectual and psychological development—his fixed obsession was the extirpation of colonial rule in India. Every other political cause or phenomenon, even the cataclysm of World War II, seems to have taken second place in his thinking. If he flirted with the *Labour Monthly* Communists, it was to use them for his purpose. And if, by the same token, they also used him for *their* political objectives, he probably did not care, because their objectives were of only peripheral interest to him. Indian independence was the all-consuming end, and nearly any effective means to it would have been acceptable to him.

What must have been the effect on him when India was

at last granted independence? Triumphant gratification, surely. But also, perhaps, a sense of loss, a sudden disorientation. The intellectual and emotional pivot of his existence had been removed. Now he would have to apply the habits and attitudes of a lifetime to a wholly new context, one to which the old patterns of thought and feeling might not be entirely relevant.

Britain's post-World War II reappraisal of her place in the scheme of things appeared to him a masterpiece of statesmanship. And, indeed, has the world ever seen anything like it? She had emerged victoriously from a war which would have ended in disaster without her tenacity. Seemingly enshrouded by glory, she was ready now to liquidate her global empire. This was an unprecedented performance, and a very shrewd one, too. For by doing this, Britain salvaged the substance of empire—enlarged investment opportunities, increased trade and the ability to help construct a broader market for British goods. Also, she earned the respect of her former subjects. This was one of the main reasons why the erstwhile questioner and antagonist, the Indian Saul, now became a friend and protagonist, the Indian Paul.

But this revised attitude toward Britain was only one facet of Krishna Menon's transition to the realities of the new situation. The preoccupation with his life-long *bête noire*, imperialism, could not be so easily diverted. His record as a diplomat and statesman shows this all too clearly. The constant *leitmotif* of his diplomacy is the assault on what he deems to be renascent or anachronistic colonialism. His first prescription for any Asian, African or Middle Eastern crisis is to get the white "imperialists" out of the picture, then to deal with the specific problem at hand.

There are certain corollaries to this attitude which Western

statesmen find particularly disturbing. Krishna Menon tends to define imperialism in historically classic terms. Ideally, it means to him interference by the traditionally imperialist western powers in African and Asian affairs. This mental picture seems to become somewhat blurred when a western power such as the Soviet Union, not traditionally associated with imperialism, is involved. And it becomes even more blurred when aggressions and oppressions occur in an exclusively Asian or exclusively Western context. The fate of Tibet and Hungary or the Indian-Chinese border problem appear not to have qualified as examples of imperialism in Krishna Menon's scheme of things, and his responses to these issues have been feeble and indecisive. The Suez crisis, on the other hand, excited him vastly. Despite the fact that the specific *casus belli* might have arisen between any sovereign states anywhere, it was the armed presence of Britain and France once again in the Middle East that seems to have set Krishna Menon's emotions churning.

And then there is the problem of Krishna Menon's patent animosity toward the United States.

Why America, a nation without any colonies? Because Krishna Menon does not like the avatar of the "western club." To Krishna Menon, America's role looks like the old story of the white man, holding on to his "burden" for dear life, leading the little brown brothers to safety—which in practice means his own security. Even without colonies, America's actions remind many Indians of the ways of the British in their prime. Today American bases encircle the globe, American fighting ships scour all the seas, and Americans dominate the skies. The British installations were never as widespread. Britain had bases only in some of her overseas possessions, and her navy was only a fire brigade, to be called out in emer-

gencies. In this age of vast uncertainties, the Indians say, defense and offense overlap, and what appears to be protection to one nation seems to be provocation to the other. India's past experience with the British at their colonial "best" makes India particularly sensitive to the solicitude of the "western club."

These are some of the ostensible reasons for India's criticisms of America's policies. They may have some bearing on the attitudes of men like Krishna Menon. But there are certain phases of international life which cannot be articulated. American foreign policy is also unpopular in New Delhi for another reason, which can never be fully stated in public. That reason is Pakistan.

At the time the question of independence for India became an urgent matter, a few years after World War II, articulate Indians could not admit that the bisection of the subcontinent into two independent nations was justified. India had been an economic unit under the British for several generations, its productive forces and markets interlinked. Why should there be a vivisection, which might be fatal to both parts? Because—the proponents of an independent Pakistan contended—India and Pakistan followed two basically different religions. To this contention the Indians replied that nationalism and religion belonged in two different categories. Thereupon the proponents of Pakistan rebutted that in the context of the life of the subcontinent, the religions were closely linked to traditions, historical memories and basically different ways of life.

The discussion had to end at that point. This controversy could have gone on forever, and then there might have been another government in Britain, and independence might have been postponed again. But what Krishna Menon and

other Indian leaders cannot say is that they do not believe that Pakistan has a *raison d'être*.

And now we come back again to the role of the United States, and a very strong reason why Krishna Menon—more outspoken than most other Indian leaders—manifests so much animosity toward it.

The United States has been underwriting the existence of what many Indians think is a totally unnatural unit. America is ready to help anybody who signs up for a possible crusade against the Soviet Union. Pakistan has signed up in two American-sponsored mutual-assistance organizations: CEN-TO, the Central Treaty Organization, and SEATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. Indians say Pakistan is worried about India, not the Soviet Union. Kashmir is only a side-issue in Indian-Pakistani relations. Through Pakistan, the white man is back again on the Indian subcontinent. This time it is Uncle Sam who carries the white man's burden. American and West European diplomats no longer take Krishna Menon's anti-American outbursts as seriously as they once did. But there can be no doubt that his derogations have had their effect both on American and on Afro-Asian attitudes towards India. His public statements have helped to undermine many Americans' faith in the benevolence of the Government of India itself, and Krishna Menon has been liberally quoted by American opponents of economic aid for India. By the same token, many Afro-Asians have come to feel that Krishna Menon's biases are incompatible with genuine neutralism and, as a result, India's prestige in these areas also has suffered somewhat in recent years. It is the awareness of this decline in prestige which, more than anything else, has infuriated Krishna Menon's critics in India.

A Psychological Factor

When the British were at the helm they did what they thought was best, first for themselves and then for their colonial charges. Their role was unpopular. They knew it, and they never expected to be liked. They also knew that it ran counter to countries' basic natures to like stronger powers. Since nations are sovereign, they consider themselves above the law. Their will may be enforced with arms, and up to the point at which they are defeated, they are godlike. Smaller nations know that their own sovereignty is limited by the superior power of superpowers, and this they resent.

The United States is not yet fully adjusted to its dominant position in the free world. Americans like to be liked abroad. Yet no nation in America's dominant position has ever been wholeheartedly liked. Americans talk of ingratitude, and feel offended.

One of Krishna Menon's prominent personal traits is to say "nay" when others say "aye." Also, he does not like to offer his tribute to a strength with which he cannot cope. If Americans want to be liked, that is an additional reason why he should like them less. The British lion has become tame, and it is no longer much fun to twist its tail. But it *is* fun to pluck the tail-feathers of the eagle.

The malicious pleasure he derives from tormenting the Americans provides a partial explanation of his "soft" attitude toward the Soviet Union. As many uncommitted nations have long since discovered, no better stick for beating America exists than a policy of apparent amiability toward the Soviets. It is a beating which can be administered for fun, and, quite often, for profit as well.

But this is, at best, only a partial explanation. Krishna Me-

non's sympathy for the Soviets is real. In his younger days, Communist Russia not only served as an example of how a backward agrarian nation could modernize and industrialize rapidly without benefit of large amounts of capital, but also appeared as an ally in the lonely, all-consuming struggle against imperialism. Perhaps now, unconsciously, Krishna Menon is repaying his debt to the Communists, has permitted himself to become, to some extent, *their* ally—a process made easier by persuading himself that the archenemy of the Soviet Union is, in fact, an imperialist nation.

Finally, of course, there is in Krishna Menon that curiously paradoxical tendency, his pro-British snobbery. One can imagine that his ambivalent attitude toward Britain has always produced a certain amount of frustration in him. Britain's decline as a world power—to which his own contribution was, from one point of view, not insignificant—seems to have saddened him. Perhaps he finds a kind of release now in venting his anti-imperialist hostilities on Britain's successor. He shows a marked tendency to compare Britain and the United States in a spirit of "O! what a falling off was there." Does this, one wonders, serve the double function of permitting him the luxury of repaying his debt to England while assuaging his guilt feelings toward her?

Watchman, What of the Night?

Krishna Menon is in his mid-sixties, and ours seems to be the "Age of Age"—elderly men in key positions. Nehru is an aged man, and for several years the question has been asked, "After him, who?" Panditji's answer to this question has always been, "It is not I but India who will select my successor. India is a democracy, you know."

This is true, but only partially so. Nehru is recognized as a charismatic leader of India, and if he had groomed a successor, the chances are that the new man would have been accepted. He has not groomed anyone, because he did not want to train a potential competitor, nor did he want to share the limelight with anyone else. A statesman of towering stature, he is also a politician. The creator of his own "Establishment," nobody has been allowed to approach his exalted place. This was probably the right strategy from the point of view of his nation. India's problems of nation-building would have been far greater if there had been political squabbling.

After the 1962 national elections, *The New York Times*' A. M. Rosenthal reported from New Delhi that there were two opposite poles in the Indian cabinet: "One is Defense Minister V. K. Krishna Menon, closer to the Prime Minister than any other official in India, admired by the left, and feared by the center and the right. The other is Finance Minister Morarji R. Desai, an aesthetic conservative whose influence among the backroom politicians is still considerable but whose standing with Mr. Nehru has been slipping dramatically."

Backing Krishna Menon is Transport Minister Jagjivan Ram, senior minister in Mr. Nehru's cabinet. While not well known outside India, Mr. Ram has a reputation for political in-fighting, and also for his prestige as the only *harijan*—child of God (formerly called, "untouchable")—to serve in the cabinet. "It all depends on Nehru, and you never know with the Old Man," experienced politicians say.

Assuming that Krishna Menon were to succeed Nehru, what could be expected of him? We can only speculate on what he might or might not do. We have to proceed from the premise that he would not be where he is if he were

not a skillful politician. In spite of his crude talk, he knows very well what he is doing. Obviously, he would have to consider the interests of India, for his own personal interests are involved with hers. His personal ideology might not necessarily occupy a dominant place in his management of the national policy, unless it were to coincide with his interpretation of the national interest. We have had excellent illustrations of the precedence of national interests over personal ideologies in recent years. Recall the record of Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito. Even the most dedicated Communists have not hesitated to throw theories overboard in favor of the exigencies of their political position.

But a political leader's policies are not merely the product of an interaction between necessity and ideology. They are conditioned also by attitudes acquired slowly and often unconsciously during a lifetime. And this is precisely what troubles many western statesmen when they are confronted with the policies of the leaders of some of the former colonial areas. Many of the sensitive intellectuals of decades ago, the liberal minds that were open to spiritual and intellectual influences, people who prided themselves on being revolutionaries and progressives, now appear curiously frozen and inflexible. The impressions which formed their characters were so overwhelming that they seem unable to digest new developments. Instead, they respond to fundamentally new situations either by ignoring them or by treating them as though they were repetitions of events which occurred in the past.

Krishna Menon's critics identify him with this mentality. It would, they argue, be a disaster if such a man were to be given the responsibility of leading the most important nation in the uncommitted world. It would be a disaster, not because

Krishna Menon is a crypto-Communist, nor even because of his abrasive personality (the first is almost certainly untrue, and the second is irrelevant), but because his automatic responses to certain types of situations—his judgments, if you will—are dangerously inappropriate and unrealistic.

A New Policy for Asia?

Asia and parts of other continents revolted against the West and then set out to imitate it—in armaments, policies of prestige and overgrown bureaucracies. Europe is thus still in the underdeveloped parts of the globe. India, too, has copied many features of the West. Geographically, she is in Asia, ideologically, in Europe. Nehru's successor may wish to introduce a policy more in line with the needs of economically backward countries.

The question of armaments is a classic illustration of how the West is back again in the East. Large portions of the economically backward countries are spending proportionately just as much on armaments as the affluent powers. This makes no sense, because their non-nuclear arms in the nuclear age are like bows and arrows in the firearms age. They are impotent to act against a great power. What purpose does their armament serve? It serves the purpose of squaring accounts with their neighbors, who are also provided only with non-nuclear weapons. The medicine in this case is more harmful than the disease. War is only a possibility, but hunger is a certainty. The amounts these countries spend on their armaments weaken them. They decimate themselves, a type of perverse semi-suicide.

For years now the superpowers seem to have been engaged in trying to find a common platform for a disarmament

agreement. They have not succeeded, and so they have kept on stepping up their arms expenditures. Nor are they likely to succeed within the foreseeable future. The disarmament discussions are face-saving, and in some instances, propaganda devices, and the people who are engaged in them know it. The superpowers do not trust each other.

It is at this point that the new statesmanship of the economically backward countries, India at their head, could part ways with the methods of the affluent nations, which they seek to imitate. The hungry countries cannot afford this extravaganza of armament profligacy. Why not try to show some sense, by stepping out of their roles as imitators? Instead of protecting something they have not got—a decent living standard—their savings in armament expenditures would enable them to help their peoples have a life worth having. Disarmament agreements among these “have-not” countries would make much sense. Also, such agreements would help revive the moribund United Nations. The world organization would be the guarantor of their security.

Might Krishna Menon attempt to advance such a bold program? He had the reputation of being a pacifist in one of his previous “reincarnations.” Or was his pacifism a theoretical one, “safe” because he was far removed from the seat of the mighty? Academe and the War Office speak mutually unintelligible tongues.

The economically backward countries may wish to part ways with their former masters in another way, too. Let me explain what I have in mind by means of a personal experience.

The scene was the federal legislature of India in New Delhi, the *Lok Sabha*—House of the People—and the *Rajya Sabha*—House of the States. The time was the hot monsoon

period. The debate was about the external budget of India. Day after day the deputies rose to speak on the subject, according to the best parliamentary methods of Britain. It was an inspiring scene.

Several of the speakers covered the entire world, expressing their opinions on a large variety of subjects—*tours d'horizons*—that covered the entire waterfront. Some of them favored the West; most of them followed the non-alignment policy of India. And this went on and on and on. Day after day I went into the popular sections of Delhi after these parliamentary sessions, and I could not help feeling that what the deputies were doing in the Indian legislature was a luxury the country could not afford. I also had the feeling that poor countries should keep on working on the solution to their problem of poverty. Every single minute not devoted to this problem is wasted. The legislators should concentrate on the country's poverty, and construct a large stockpile of practical plans to do away with this poverty. In this light I no longer think that slavishly following Britain's administrative practices is always in the best interest of the nation. India's problems are different from those of the United Kingdom.

A government needs bureaucracy, and that the British had. Some of the British bureaucrats were decent people; others were time-servers. This tradition has also been inherited by India. "Our bureaucracy is not worse than the British one was before independence." How many times does one hear this comment? Again the imitation of the West. The backward countries should realize that time is not on their side, as it was on the side of the colonial nations. Indifferent bureaucracy will not do for them. They must have the type of administration which is inspired by a quasi-religious zeal, one

that goes far beyond the call of duty. It should do speedily and efficiently what is now being done sluggishly and ineffectively.

The new bureaucrat would see something more to life than transferring files to a fellow bureaucrat's desk. Work in a government office would then become a dedicated occupation, and efficiency a patriotic service, no less valuable than service in the battleline. The greatest enemy of all these countries is want, and want's most effective ally is apathy.

Could Krishna Menon perform such a service for his country? His record as an administrator has received both praise and blame, but in his London days he displayed a talent and a zeal for getting things done which can hardly be gainsaid. Perhaps if he were to become sufficiently interested in the problem of administrative reform in India, he might accomplish great things.

No matter who is called upon to fill the highest position in India, he must be able to arouse the country to the needs of a new age in the local environment, carrying out an original policy and not one that is second-hand. Nehru became a charismatic leader, to be sure, but there is no situation in a poverty-stricken country which may not be improved.

Thus this story of the life of Krishna Menon ends with a question mark, as do the stories of all contemporary lives. Nehru's exit from the political scene may not mean Krishna Menon's exit from the "Establishment," as has been predicted many times. But even if it does, he has already made his mark upon his country's history, and upon the history of the modern world. Men in the capitals of the East and the West will ponder the significance of that enigmatic mark for a long time to come.

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[Continued from front flap]

leader of a formerly colonial nation. It is upon the integrity, the intelligence and the prejudices of men such as Krishna Menon that much of the world's future may depend. It is vital that we try to understand them.

Here, for the first time, is a full-length portrait of this enigmatic man by a well-known writer and scholar. Emil Lengyel, Professor of History at Fairleigh Dickinson University, has lived in India and has recently written a widely used textbook on the Indian subcontinent.



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10 West 56th Street, New York 19, N.Y.